



ONE-ACT PLAYS  
OF TO-DAY

THIRD SERIES



HARRAP'S MODERN  
ENGLISH SERIES



# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

*THIRD SERIES*

SELECTED BY

J. W. MARRIOTT

EDITOR OF "GREAT MODERN BRITISH PLAYS"  
"THE BEST ONE-ACT PLAYS OF 1913," ETC.  
AUTHOR OF "THE THEATRE," ETC.



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## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

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## FOREWORD

**T**HIS third collection of *One-Act Plays of To-day* has been evoked by the success of its predecessors, and there is no longer any doubt that the one-act play has established itself with readers. But the modern one-act play is not confined to the armchair, to Matriculation students, or to the classroom. The more evident, indeed, becomes the determination of theatrical managers to banish this art-form from the London theatres, the more is it proved by amateur actors (whose challenge the professional theatre is at last acknowledging) that the West End of London is not the whole of England.

Both phenomena, in fact—professional neglect of, and amateur enthusiasm for, the one-act play—extend beyond these shores. Lately a "Conference of the Drama in American Universities and Little Theatres" was held at the Carnegie Institute at Pittsburg, and one would like incidentally to emphasize the linking which implies a unanimity of aim of drama in the universities with drama in Little Theatres. And to quote a salient passage from an address at that conference by Mr Harold Brighouse, who was visiting America, "The one-act play is the basic unit of the Little Theatres; to-day it is in the Little Theatres alone that the one-act play receives attention and encouragement. From the Little Theatres, and by means of the one-act play, Eugene O'Neill and Susan Glaspell emerged to national and international significance."

It may be mentioned, in addition, that one-act plays are

## ONE ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

and in the "Little Theatre Tournament" in New York (at which, under the auspices of the Drama League, an English 'team' competed), while the one-act play is as much neglected by professionals on Broadway as in Shaftesbury Avenue.

The twentieth century remarked literature with drama after a divorce of nearly a hundred years. But just as there are plays which are literary rather than dramatic, so there are plays of sound theatrical values which are not literary. The ideal balance between word and action is upset sometimes in the direction of too many words, sometimes in the direction of too violent action. The permanent difference of opinion between those who hold Shakespeare to be more poet than playwright and those who hold him to be more playwright than poet may be recalled. The perfect balance seems unattainable.

In making the present selection continuous regard, because of the acting vogue of the one-act play, has been paid to dramatic values. As a principle, a play should act better than it reads: plays are written for acting. None, one hopes, of the following examples will be read with disappointment; but all, since they are essentially good plays, will be found to act better than they read, and the student should visualize the acting—using imagination to project the third dimension which would appear on the real stage. The novelist and short-story writer can describe action which in the case of a printed play must be read 'between the lines.'

Simplicity, the keynote of the best modern work, will be found in the dozen plays in this volume. As in the first and second series, variety of type has been an aim; and Mr Farjeon's "Friends" represents that rare form, farce which is readable as well asactable, while the new sort of pastoral

## FOREWORD

play, a hardy growth despite the English climate, is exemplified in "How the Weather is Made." And if Cockney comedy ever found more poignant expression than in "The Dumb and the Blind" the editor has yet to discover it.

J. W. M.





## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE compiler desires to express his thanks to the following authors and publishers for the permission given to print the plays in this volume :

The representatives of the late Harold Chapin for "The Dumb and the Blind"; Mr Harold Brighthouse and Messrs Samuel French, Ltd., for "How the Weather is Made," from *Open-Air Plays*; Lord Dunsany and Messrs G. P. Putnam's Sons for "The Golden Doom"; Mr John Brandane for "Rory Aforesaid"; Miss Olive Conway and Messrs Samuel French, Ltd., for "Mimi," from *Costume Plays*; Mr W. B. Yeats and Messrs Macmillan and Co., Ltd., for "The Pot of Broth," from *Plays in Prose and Verse*; and the authors or their representatives and Messrs Samuel French, Ltd., for "The Master of the House," "Friends," "The Bishop's Candlesticks," "Between the Soup and the Savoury," "Master Wayfarer," and "A King's Hard Bargain."

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# THE DUMB AND THE BLIND

## A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY HAROLD CHAPIN

### CHARACTERS

JOE HENDERSON, *of mud-barge E 4*  
LIZ, *his wife*  
EMMY, *his daughter, aged twelve*  
TOM, *his son, aged fourteen months*  
BILL PEPPER, *also of the mud-barge, his friend*

Produced for the first time on any stage by the Scottish Repertory Theatre Company, under the direction of Mr Alfred Warcing, at the Royalty Theatre, Glasgow, on Monday, November 20, 1911, with the following cast:

<i>Joe</i>	. . . .	FREDERICK LLOYD
<i>Liz</i>	. . . .	ELMIE DAVISON
<i>Bill</i>	. . . .	ELIOT MAKINAM
<i>Emmy</i>	. . . .	EUGENIE GRAY

It is hardly debatable that the best Cockney comedy of our day was written by the late Harold Chapin, who, as has been explained in the Second Series of *One-Act Plays of To-day*, was technically an American citizen. Mayfair drama has many exponents and London drama few. Perhaps the best London play of the century is Miss Elizabeth Baker's "Chains"; Mr Neil Lyons's "London Pride" was a review of London in War-time rather than a play, and Mr McEvoy possibly takes the second place with "The Likes of 'Er."

In one-act plays "Makeshifts," by the late Gertrude Robins, and the tramp-sketch "The Doorway," by Mr Harold Brighouse, call for mention; but Harold Chapin's is the last word. The late William Archer held "The Dumb and the Blind" to be his best play; in its utter simplicity it is among the masterpieces of the one-act form.

## THE DUMB AND THE BLIND<sup>1</sup>

SCENE: *A top room in a tenement-house in Bermondsey. The door opens on to the landing, across which is the bedroom. Through the open window—a large sash-window without curtains—can be seen an extensive panorama of smoking chimneys, dirty steeples, and telegraph-poles, silhouetted against a sky across which the neutral greys and warmer rose tints of a spring evening are creeping. Through this window a flood of dusty yellow sunlight illumines most of the room. The large kitchen table covered with a red cloth which stands in the window is full in this light. The linoleum-covered floor reflects it more remotely, and its farthest beams just reach the three rough chairs, which are in the course of conversion into a makeshift bed of childish proportions against the wall below the door. Other chairs are at the table: one above, one below, and one beside it facing the window.*

*The fire is burning brightly behind a large threefold clothes-horse covered with wet linen, which, being semi-transparent, is converted by the flames into a luminous screen of flaming orange which dies to a dull red and leaps again to flame when the fire is replenished. In the shadows on either side of the fire are articles of furniture: a dresser,*

<sup>1</sup> Published by Messrs Gowans and Gray, Ltd (11) Applications regarding amateur performances of this play should be addressed to Messrs Samuel French, Ltd., 25 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W C.2, or 25 West 45th Street, New York.



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*poorly furnished with crockery but rich in undarned  
novelettes, etc. ; and an old chest of drawers.*

*A cheap alarm clock, ticking on the mantelpiece and just  
above the clothes-horse, points to something past five.  
curtain rises, disclosing MRS HENDERSON engaged in  
ring the last of the wet linen on the horse, taking a  
zinc bath and wringing it with considerable strength.*

MRS HENDERSON is a big, capable-looking woman of the  
ing class. About thirty-six years of age, she is  
comely, but equally not a beauty. Her dark hair is  
tied into a knot at the back of her head and loose  
unostentatious curl-papers around her forehead. She wears  
a dark skirt and a red blouse, open at the neck, the  
being rolled up above her elbows.

From somewhere—a long way off—comes the monotonous  
iteration of an incomplete set of crimes: three  
repeated again and again rhythmically and endlessly.  
Some one in the street below is calling " Any cat's in  
or bar's taken? " at intervals of half a minute.  
voice is fading away into the distance when a clatter of  
juvenile boots on the stairs heralds the approach of  
HENDERSON, daughter of the house. The young  
enters swinging her school-bag, and crosses to the  
where she throws it down loudly. She is an ordinary  
Board School child of eleven or twelve: long black  
slightly darned, and slightly in need of darning;  
black skirt in need of lengthening; and blue blouse.  
pig-tails, boots, and a sailor hat.

*She addresses her mother reproachfully.*

EMMY. Nice fang, Murver? I dunno wot you did  
vat compoun' multiplication.

MRS HENDERSON [*apprehensively*]. Were you kep' in for?

EMMY [*incensed*]. Kep' in? . . . Didn't you never h-

# THE DUTY AND THE PLEDGE

THEY are the two great questions of the day. They are the two great questions of the future. They are the two great questions of the present.

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## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

to me again, I'll warn you, so mind. [*She attacks the make-shift bed, arranging the chairs and patting up the nondescript mattress. That done, she fetches from the chest of drawers a blanket and sheet.*]

EMMY [*reading these omens*]. Farver's night 'ome?

MRS HENDERSON [*returning with the bedclothes to the bed*]. Friday; don't you know it is?

EMMY. You needn't snap me 'ead off. 'E ain't always 'ome of a Friday.

MRS HENDERSON. Pretty near.

EMMY [*still watching the bed-making*]. 'E seems to be always comin' 'ome, don't 'e?

MRS HENDERSON. D'you mind?

[*A Cockney sarcasm, popular with the fair sex.*]

EMMY. Well—I don't particularly like sleeping on free chairs.

MRS HENDERSON [*for consolation*]. It's only for a couple o' nights.

EMMY. Yes. [*Then reminiscently*] Muvver! Do you remember w'en we 'ad 'im 'ome for a 'ole week w'ile ve barge was bein' painted?

MRS HENDERSON [*in exculpation*]. Well, 'e 'adn't got nothin' to do then. A man always gets a bit irritable-like w'en 'e ain't got nothin' to occupy 'is mind.

EMMY. I don't see as 'e's got much to occupy 'is mind—muckin' abaht on a mud-barge.

MRS HENDERSON [*straightening her back*]. Nah, Miss 'Igh-an'-Mightiness, don't you get turnin' of your nose up at ve barge; it's kept us for nigh on ten years.

EMMY. Wiv your bit o' charing.

MRS HENDERSON [*at work again*]. 'F course.

EMMY [*after some thought*]. Muvver . . .

MRS HENDERSON. Wot?

EMMY. Wot did Farver do before 'e started on ve barge?



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

EMMY [*triumphant*]. It wasn't a lamppost, it was a tram car, see? [*To the baby*] Nāh ven—— [*Calling*] Where 'is ovver shoe? [*To the baby*] W'ere's your ovver shoe Tommy? Ain't et it, 'ave you? Oh, 'ere we are. [*Pause*] 'Ullo. [*Calling*] Muvver!

MRS HENDERSON. Well?

EMMY. 'Ere's Farver comin' upstairs.

MRS HENDERSON. Oh—even if you'll wait 'arf a minute you can run aht for a pint.

Q [*A clumping of heavy feet on the stairs and a rough voice somewhere about the floor below.*

JOE [*below*]. Hulllo.

EMMY [*just outside door*]. Hulllo.

JOE. Wot are you 'avin' a game at? [*Pause*] 'Ullo, Tommy! 'Ullo, young teller-me-lad.

[*The heavy feet are ascending the stairs; two pairs of them.*

EMMY. Say "hullo" to Farver, Tommy, 'cos 'e only comes 'ome once a week.

JOE. Something like, ain't 'e?

[*A third voice—BILL PEPPER'S—replies.*

BILL [*off*]. Not 'etl.

[*JOE HENDERSON enters followed by BILL PEPPER. Both are barge-labourers: heavy-footed, ill-shaven—JOE wears a scrubby moustache—and roughly dressed in corduroys and heavy coats with red handkerchiefs around their necks.*

MRS HENDERSON. Hulllo.

JOE [*not to be outdone in courtesy*]. Hulllo. [*Then after a pause*] I've brought old Bill up; d'you—— [*He stumbles over the bath on the floor R. C. and instantly is in a temper.*] Blast it! Wot d'yer want to 'ave var blinkin' flog abaht re floor for?

MRS HENDERSON. I was wringing——

## THE DUMB AND THE BLIND

JOE. I might 'a' broke me bloomin' neck over it.

MRS HENDERSON. Well, you didn't.

JOE. Clever, ain't you? Leavin' fings. Can't you sit dahn, Bill, after those stairs——?

BILL. Vey are a bit. . . . [*Crosses and sits below table.*]

JOE [*crosses and cuts a piece of bread at table, then sits and starts eating*]. Puh! You've got it 'ot enough in 'ere.

MRS HENDERSON. I've 'ad the window open. I 'ad to 'ave the fire, to dry by.

JOE [*angrily*]. Washin'!

MRS HENDERSON [*nervously*]. Yes, Joe.

EMMY [*appearing in door*]. Can I 'ave 'apenny to spend, Muvver?

MRS HENDERSON [*shocked at the idea*]. No! Wot next?

EMMY. Oh, Muvver, just 'apenny, cos——

MRS HENDERSON. You know perfectly well as I——

JOE [*raising his voice above theirs in spite of the handicap of a mouthful of bread*]. Go on! Give 'er a 'apenny wen she asks for it.

MRS HENDERSON [*expatiating*]. Joe, 'ow can I——?

JOE. Give 'er a 'apenny I say, when I tells you to. . . . And don't answer me back.

[*MRS HENDERSON with dull obedience obeys, taking from her pocket a purse.*]

JOE [*less loudly*]. And send 'er out to get me a drop o' beer.

[*MRS HENDERSON takes down a jug from dresser.*]

EMMY. Nah, you know I can't go into a pub wiv baby, Farver.

JOE. Wot? W'y not?

EMMY. It's agin ve law.

BILL [*quietly, but with authority*]. Vat's right, Joe.

MRS HENDERSON [*in further corroboration*]. Yes, vey——

JOE [*turning on her*]. Ven go an' get it yourself.

MRS HENDERSON. Alright.



# THE DUMB AND THE BLIND

MRS HENDERSON [*who has been quietly making up the fire*] I'm going, Joe. Gimme time to make the fire up.

JOE [*grunting scornfully*] Make ve fire up.

MRS HENDERSON [*with more scorn*] You don't want to sleep in wet sheets to-night, I suppose.

JOE. I never see anythink like you! You're always on fings dryin' wen I come 'ome. Wot's up wiv you?

MRS HENDERSON. You wouldn't like to come 'ome to find ve place all dirty, would you, Joe?

JOE. Well ven, w'y couldn't you get 'em done early in ve week? You know puffedekly well as I'd be 'ome o' Friday night. An' 'ere you are a doin' of 'em ve very day I comes 'ome. Aggravator!

MRS HENDERSON. I 'ad a bit o' charing to do yesterday. I'll 'ave 'em all done an' out of ve way before your nex' night 'ome I—— [*She is taking down jug as she speaks.*]

JOE. You won't 'ave ve chance. I'm not goin' away no more.

MRS HENDERSON [*turning jug in hand*] Wot?

JOE. I ain't goin' away with ve barge no more.

MRS HENDERSON [*apprehensively*] Got ve sack?

JOE [*insulted*]. Wot d'you mean—"Got ve sack"? Vey've put me on ve dredger; ten bob a week extra an' live at 'ome.

MRS HENDERSON. At 'ome?

JOE. Yes, at 'ome. . . . Wot's up wiv you?

MRS HENDERSON. You'll be 'ome all ve week ven——? Every week?

JOE [*sarcastically*]. D'you mind?

MRS HENDERSON. I'll—— [*Suddenly opens door and exits, closing it after her.*]

BILL. She don't seem very pleased.

JOE [*roughly tolerant*]. She's alright. Bit startled, vat's all. She'll 'ave to get used to it.



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

BILL [*after a pause, excitedly*]. Bit o' luck, ain't it?  
JOE [*unenthusiastically*]. It's alright.

BILL. Ten bob a week more.

JOE. Laz'll get that aht o' me—some of it—wen I  
all the week.

BILL [*axed*]. You won't go givin' 'er ve 'ole lot of

JOE. Ve 'ole ten bob! Wot do you take me for  
you fink I'm goin' to slave me 'cart out on ve  
dredger an' not 'ave a bit for merself? Don't b  
[*Changing subject*] Firsty?

BILL [*with some satisfaction*]. Not bad.

JOE. So'm I. Jolly 'ot in 'ere, ain't it?

BILL. I don't mind it.

JOE. It's not 'ealthy, you know. [*Rises and pulls  
out from table to enable himself to stoop and undo his  
Vat's Liz all over! Goes aht charin' wile I'm aw  
messes abaht ve place all ve bloomin' time wen I'm  
Never goes aht, 'ardly, except to get me a drop o'  
Aggravator!*]

[*There is a moment's pause while JOE removes*

BILL [*voicing his thoughts*]. You 'ave to work jolly 'o  
the dredger.

JOE [*unlacing the other boot*]. Yes.

BILL [*continuing*]. All ve time—wiv ve foreman wat  
you.

JOE. I know. [*Straightening his back, and speaking  
becoming seriousness.*] I'm not so sure as I'm really bet  
merself, you know, Bill. [*Pauses, thinking.*] Of cours  
ten bob more . . . but they gets it out of you in work.

BILL. I expects vey'd put you back on one of ve ol' b  
if you arst 'em to.

JOE [*rucking doubtfully on a tooth*]. Risky.

BILL. Risky! 'Ow!

JOE. Make 'em fink as you didn't like work.

## THE DUMB AND THE BLIND

BILL. Ah!

JOE [*disparagingly*]. Vey're like vat.

BILL. Vat's true.

JOE [*returning to his seat*]. She's takin' 'er time over vat beer.

BILL. Fat to go for it! [*Rising and looking out of the window.*]

JOE. Just across ve road.

BILL. Don't see no sign of 'er. Wich pub?

JOE. Fird along . . . not countin' those two opposite.

BILL [*crossing room to a small photo of a group hanging on wall below door*]. Vis you?

JOE [*looking up*]. Wot? Oh vat. Yes—wiv Liz.

BILL. Taken wen you was married? Plenty of you, ain't vere?

JOE. Vat's all Liz's family.

BILL. None o' yours?

JOE [*grimly*]. I saw to vat.

BILL. Oo's vis? [*Appreciatively*] Bit of alright.

JOE. Vat? One of Liz's sisters or somethink; vey all turned up.

BILL. W'y didn't you marry 'er?

JOE. She wasn't respectable.

BILL. Was you married in church?

JOE. Yes. Liz would 'ave it. You know wot women are for a bit o' show.

BILL. It don't do to give way to 'em.

JOE. One 'as to at ve start. Liz said as 'ow she'd be married in church or not at all. . . .

BILL. You should a' said not at all ven.

JOE [*tolerantly*]. Oh, I dunno. . . .

BILL [*still at photo*]. Oo's vis? Ol' chap wiv a beard. . . .

JOE. Liz's farver . . . worked at a brewery. W'ere ve blinkin' Sam's vat beer?

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

BILL. She does take 'er time, don't she ?

JOE. I'd go alter 'er only—— *[Directed of his boots he pads softly up to the door and opens it. He is about to step out on to landing when something catches his eye in the room opposite and he stops dead, staring across the landing more in curiosity than surprise.]* 'Ullo. . . . Wot . . . ?

BILL *[turning]*. Wot's up ?

JOE *[softly]*. Come 'ere.

BILL *[taking his tone from the other]*. Wot is it ? *[Moves softly up stage towards door.]*

JOE *[suddenly changing his mind and closing the door softly but silently]*. No . . . 'art a mo'.

BILL *[stopping, surprised]*. Wot's up wiv you ?

JOE. Nuffin'. *[Turns to door, his hand upon the knob, but looks back suspiciously at BILL before opening it.]* It ain't nuffin', I say.

BILL. Alright.

JOE. Ven don't go lookin' over my shoulder.

BILL. I wasn't.

JOE *[pointing to the farthest chair : the one below the table]*. Go an' sit over yere.

BILL *[surprised but amiable]*. Alright.

*[JOE watches him to the chair, and then quietly opens door again and peers across landing. He holds the door a bare couple of feet open, and, as it opens down stage, nothing can be seen from the audience. After a moment of perfect silence he closes the door softly, ruffling his hair thoughtfully. An idea strikes him. He resumes his chair by the table and calls.]*

JOE *[loudly]*. Liz !

BILL *[who has been watching his friend in amazement]*. W . . . ain't she gone for it, ven ?

JOE. She's in ve over room.

## THE DUMB AND THE BLIND

BILL. 'Iding ?

JOE. Shut up. *[Calls again.]* Liz.

*[While the name is still on his lips MRS HENDERSON opens the door and stands on the threshold, her hat on and the jug in her hand.]*

MRS HENDERSON *[stopping just inside the door]*. I'm just goin' for it, Joe. I 'ad to stop an' put on me 'at. *[Turns to go.]*

JOE. Liz.

MRS HENDERSON *[turning obediently]*. Wot ?

JOE. 'Atf a mo'.

MRS HENDERSON *[obediently returning to C. of room]*. Wot ?

JOE *[awkwardly, as he forms a question in his mind]*. Liz

. . . wot— *[Suddenly remembering the presence of his friend]* 'Ere, Bill . . . oblige me by poppin' aht for vat beer . . . you don't mind ?

BILL *[rising, mystified]*. No.

JOE. I'd go meself, only I've got me boots off 'Ere. *[Hands over some money.]* Get a quart . . . no 'urry. . .

BILL. Alright. *[Goes off in dull perplexity.]*

MRS HENDERSON. I 'ope Bill don't mind. . .

JOE *[ignoring her remark]*. Liz.

MRS HENDERSON. Wot ?

JOE. Wot was you adoin' of ?

MRS HENDERSON. Wot was I wot ?

JOE. Wot was you adoin' of ?

MRS HENDERSON. W'en ?

JOE. Just now. W'en I called you.

MRS HENDERSON. Putting me 'at on.

JOE. No, you wasn't. I opened ve door.

MRS HENDERSON. Ve door ? What for ?

JOE. To 'ave a look aht an' see wot 'ad become of you an' vat beer. An' I see you in vcre kneelin' wiv your 'ed on ve bed. Wot's up wiv you ?

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF 'TO-DAY

MRS HENDERSON [*guiltily*]. I was sayin' me prayers.

JOE. Wot?

MRS HENDERSON. It don't take. . . .

JOE. You don't 'ave to say your prayers before fetchin' a drop o' beer, do you?

MRS HENDERSON [*reproaching the irreverence*]. Joe!

JOE. Well, wot's up wiv you, ven? [*No answer.*] Ain't you well?

MRS HENDERSON. I'm alright.

JOE. You don't say ven every day, do you?

MRS HENDERSON. No, nuffink like.

JOE. Ven wot. . . .?

MRS HENDERSON. I felt I wanted to.

JOE. Felt you wanted to? W'y?

MRS HENDERSON. I felt—grateful-like—vat's all.

JOE. Felt wot?

MRS HENDERSON. Grateful-like. . . . you know. . . .  
[*Ashamed*] I sort of felt I wanted to— [*Hesitates.*]

JOE. Well?

MRS HENDERSON [*more and more ashamed*]. To sort o' fank Gawd—it come over me. . . .

JOE. Fank Gawd? Wot for?

MRS HENDERSON. Well, because. . . . you. . . . ain't goin' away no more.

[*JOE is paralysed with amazement and sits staring at her, unable to speak. At last—awed—he clears his throat.*]

JOE. You. . . . [*Inadequately*] You're glad, ven?

MRS HENDERSON. It's—it's a bit o' company for me—

JOE. Wot? I am? Get aht! [*Rises and looks out of window, thinking*] You don't like me goin' away, ven?

MRS HENDERSON. Well, I missed you sometimes.

JOE [*under his breath*]. 'Struth!

MRS HENDERSON. You mean you don't miss me?

## THE DUMB AND THE BLIND

JOE. I donno. I never noticed.

MRS HENDERSON. Oh, but you always 'ad something to occupy your mind.

JOE. Yea. *(With a fresh thought.)* Liz.

MRS HENDERSON. Wot?

JOE. You . . . I mean . . . it ain't just a 'abit wiv ou?

MRS HENDERSON. Wot?

JOE. Fankin' Gawd for fings. You ain't always adoin' of?

MRS HENDERSON. No. I just come over—

JOE. D'you believe in Gawd?

MRS HENDERSON. I donno. . . . Yea.

JOE *(in just the same tone—he has been looking out of the window as he spoke)*. 'Ere comes of Bill wiv ve beer.

MRS HENDERSON *(relieved)*. I'll put shi ve glasses.

*(She brings down glasses from the dresser to table. He takes her by the arm and turns her to him.)*

JOE. You're quite sure it ain't just a 'abit? You're really 'lad as I'm goin' to be 'ome . . . all ve time? Spit your 'at?

MRS HENDERSON. Of courie I'm glad, Joe. Really glad—  
*(Bill enters with the beer.)*

BILL *(engrossed in his purchase)*. I spilt a bit comin' up ve stairs. Vey've vat dask!

JOE. Vat's alright.

BILL *(stopping and looking at them suspiciously)*. Anything ap?

JOE. No.

*(Bill returns to his usual chair below the table. Mrs Henderson has taken the beer from him, and takes it to Joe.)*

JOE *(slowly pouring out the beer and passing it to Bill)*. D'you believe in Gawd, Bill?



# HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE

## A LITTLE FANTASY

By HAROLD BAINBRIDGE

### CHARACTERS

THE CLERK OF THE WEATHER

MIN SMITH      MAY

SOL      JUNE

RAIN      JULY

FROST      AUGUST

JANUARY      SEPTEMBER

FEBRUARY      OCTOBER

MARCH      NOVEMBER

APRIL      DECEMBER



It was originally intended to print "The Price of Coal"—about which Professor Allardyce Nicoll speaks with approbation in *British Drama*<sup>1</sup>—as a representative specimen of Mr Brighouse's work. With the object, however, of including an example of the modern pastoral play "How the Weather is Made" has been substituted.

While this play presents no difficulties for indoor performance it is one of several in *Open-Air Plays* and *Plays for the Meadow* and *Plays for the Lawn* (both volumes published by Messrs Samuel French) written specifically for outdoor performance. Technically, the outdoor play has its own little problems. As there can be no curtain there can be no climacteric 'curtains,' no scenery beyond Nature's own, and a minimum of 'properties'—such, for example, as a garden-seat—should be employed. It is almost the problem of the circus: the performers are not cut off, glamorously, from the audience by a proscenium arch and a raised stage; and the sense of romance must be evoked by costume. The best-known of these outdoor plays by Mr Brighouse are "The Prince who was a Piper" and "Maypole Morning" in *Plays for the Meadow*; but the following example, and "The Laughing Mind" in the new volume, *Open-Air Plays*, should speedily establish themselves.

<sup>1</sup> Harrap, 121. 6d.

## HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE<sup>1</sup>

*The scene is an open space, carpeted by grass, with more than two entrances to it if you feel extravagant, but at any rate one entrance to the R. and another to the L.*

*A preoccupied gentleman, formally dressed in morning coat and silk hat, walks into the space. A young lady, in summer clothes, but carrying an umbrella and a Burberry, enters in pursuit of him. Her name is everybody's name, but for convenience we may call her MISS SMITH.*

MISS SMITH. Excuse me! Excuse me, sir.

THE GENTLEMAN [*without turning*]. Busy, busy!

MISS SMITH. But I must speak to you. It's most urgent.

THE GENTLEMAN [*now turning*]. Have you filled in a form?

MISS SMITH. No. I didn't know that was necessary.

[*So the GENTLEMAN continues his walk.*

Oh, I won't be bound by red tape. I will speak to you.

You are the Clerk of the Weather, aren't you?

THE CLERK. Am I to have no privacy anywhere?

MISS SMITH. But you are a public servant and I'm the public. I want to know——

THE CLERK [*turning, raising his hat*]. Madam, bulletins are issued from Room 6058 double *x q*. If you will kindly apply to the officer in charge——

<sup>1</sup> Applications regarding amateur performances of this play should be addressed to Messrs Samuel French, Ltd., 26 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W C2, or 23 West 45th Street, New York.



## HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE

MISS SMITH. Truth has no manners, Mr Clerk.

THE CLERK. You can't be aware what you said. You have attributed ignorance to Government officials!

MISS SMITH. A crime, I suppose!

[And if you think MISS SMITH'S modern flippancy amounts to Believism, why, aren't we all?]

THE CLERK. In a better age than this you would have been beheaded. As it is, madam, in this chaotic era of humanitarian sentimentality when people can forget the respect due to Government officials and can escape the discipline of decapitation, as it is, madam, I incline to clarify your unbelief myself. I have a mind to draw aside the awful veil and to compel you with your own eyes to witness the weather in the making.

MISS SMITH. You really do know? [*She begins to think it possible.*]

THE CLERK. Madam, the weather is a very old institution and a very conservative one. The weather does not change.

MISS SMITH. You know, even as the formal pronouncement of a Government official, that strikes me as a corking whopper.

THE CLERK. I should have put it that the weather is unchanging in its habit of changing.

MISS SMITH. Thank you. Most informing. And is that what you meant by drawing aside the veil? I might have known you meant nothing.

THE CLERK. I did not mean nothing. If I decide to draw the veil I shall be revealing to you the causes of the weather.

MISS SMITH. That's what I want. Let's get at the cause and there's hope of a cure.

THE CLERK. There is no hope.

[*His gloom is tragic: it is the profound sadness of the sage.*]

MISS SMITH. I'm afraid you're a pessimist. Modern science——

THE CLERK. Good night. I know it is late, but I  
am a little late myself. If you would think that I were a  
big thing, I am a big person, who's got there in time, so  
I am a little late. I am a little late, I am a little late.  
THE CLERK. You're trying to be a big man.  
THE CLERK. Can you bend at the hip?  
MISS SMITH. Only for a moment, the same as every one  
else.

THE CLERK. In the Grip of the Weather, it may be  
very easy to look at the sun for half an hour.

MISS SMITH. Can you stand it?

THE CLERK. It is part of my official duty to stand it.

MISS SMITH. Then I'm perfectly sure it's safe.

THE CLERK. Very well, madam, I defy the Official Secrets  
Act and I introduce you, at your own risk, to the inner  
mystery of the weather. Come with me, come, behold  
and learn for yourself how hopeless is the hope that man  
can bend the weather to his will.

*[With outspread arms he makes the gesture of drawing  
a curtain and bows MISS SMITH into the spot  
behind.]*

You may watch, and you may sit down, but you may not  
speak.

MISS SMITH. As there are no seats, I—

*[Do you know, she is quite resentful. Yet many people  
stand for hours in order to see a football match.]*

THE CLERK. As there are no seats, you may lie down.

Permit me.

*[He takes her mackintosh and spreads it as a rug on  
one side. MISS SMITH reclines on the mackintosh  
and dandles for a while into inconspicuousness.  
Meanwhile SOL has entered, a very splendid per-  
son in flame-colour, with a bat suggesting a crown.  
He looks bored, and he too rests on the grass.]*

## HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE

yawns audibly, which causes the CLERK to turn from MISS SMITH and to run to SOL, bearing.

THE CLERK. Good morning. I hope you're merely lying down to rest. Your health is—

SOL. My health is excellent. But I am bored.

THE CLERK. Oh, my dear Sol, no! I implore you! The World suffers alarmingly when you are bored.

SOL. The World does not count for much in a solar system, my friend. [*Rises, yawns and stretching.*] And I am bored.

THE CLERK. It is such a disaster to the World.

SOL. Your parochial troubles don't agitate me. It's June. That month puts a terrible strain on my constancy.

THE CLERK. Only thirty days, your Majesty. One of the shorter months.

SOL. I know, but they begin at 3 A.M. and go on till 9 P.M. How would you like a working day of eighteen hours? That's what the jade expects of me.

THE CLERK. I don't find in my reports that she often sees as much of you as that.

SOL. Probably not. June has a pretty face, but I ask you, can any sun make love to the same face for eighteen hours a day?

[JUNE enters: decked with roses. Her face is sun-burnt. Flatness is fatal to shell-pink.]

JUNE [*running towards SOL*]. My lover and my king!

SOL. Good morning. You're a little late to-day.

JUNE. A jealous mist parted us.

SOL. Oh, I'm not reproaching you. I'm sure if you care to disobey the calendar, it's no business of mine.

JUNE. I hate the calendar. The calendar makes a short month of me and gives me fewer days with you than some of my sisters have.

SOL. But yours are longer days.

animalcule, man. If you  
thing, let me advise you, while yet there is time,  
draw from beholding the mystery of the weather.  
MISS SMITH. You're trying to frighten me.  
THE CLERK. Can you look at the sun?

MISS SMITH. Only for a moment, the same as every one  
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*[Do you know, she is quite resentful. Yet many people  
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JUNE. I hate the calendar  
month of me and five  
my sisters h——

if you care  
me.

takes a short  
than some of



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

JUNE. That is because you love me best of all the months.

JOE. I have to love you longest.

JUNE. Have to? You speak as if you found it disagreeable.

JOE. I wouldn't say positively disagreeable. A trifle monotonous, perhaps.

JUNE. Indeed? Then why did you chase Rain away yesterday?

JOE. Did I? A moment of carelessness. Mere force of habit.

JUNE. Oh!

JOE. Well, my dear, after I've been staring at you for eighteen hours——

THE CLERK. Or thereabouts.

JOE. —or thereabouts. More or less eighteen hours, I'm bound to say your face becomes a little obvious. I don't blame you. Any face would.

JUNE. Perhaps you prefer January?

JOE. It's possible, but like a woman, my dear, you are running to extremes. I have never seen January's face. January is month-in-a-mist. Always she wears a veil.

JUNE. Then you can be perfectly certain it's because she has something to hide.

*[Enter JANUARY, who wears a long veil.]*

JANUARY. I beg your pardon!

THE CLERK *[interposing in the greatest alarm]*. January, I beg you for the sake of every growing thing on Earth! It is summer. Consider the lilies of the field.

JANUARY. What do we care for that Earth of yours?

JOE. This little man is always worrying about the Earth. Stand aside, Clerk, and let me—— *[Pushing the CLERK aside and approaching JANUARY.]*

JANUARY. Oh, you are nearer to me than ever you have been before! *[Slowly she raises her veil: her face is very pale.]* My mists are melting in the fire of your eyes.

## HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE

JUNE. I hope it doesn't make you feel clammy.

[*But she means, we fear, the opposite of what she says.*]

JANUARY [*finishing the raising of her veil and standing at full height*]. I feel the Sun. Sol, King! [*She bows.*]

SOL [*raising her*]. You please me, January.

JUNE. With that pale face? I'm sure she's anæmic.

SOL. And you are brown.

JUNE. How can I help being burnt when you glare at me all day?

SOL. My dear June, you shall have nothing to reproach me with in the future.

THE CLERK. I must protest. If you desert June—

SOL. Something will happen to your precious Earth, I suppose?

THE CLERK. Incalculable calamity will happen.

SOL. How very unfortunate for you that I find January more attractive every moment.

THE CLERK. In the *Book of Weather* it is writ that

"If the grass grow in Janivver  
It grows the worse for all the year."

SOL. Indeed? And am I a farmer?

THE CLERK. You are everything! [*He bows deeply to show that a clerk can be a courtier.*]

SOL. But not everything all at once. Just now, little man, I am a lover. Come, my January! [*Put arm round her waist.*]

JANUARY [*sighing*]. Oh! [*A very melting lady, which is not surprising when you consider who she is and who he is.*]

JUNE [*jealously*]. Am I to be scorned for the sake of a cold, pale-faced month who cannot put a flower on anything except the gorse?

SOL. Can't she? If I will it she shall wear white hawthorn

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

in her hair and golden corn shall ripen where she sets her feet.

THE CLERK. Oh, confusion! Corn and hawthorn blossom! Your Majesty——

SOL. I am your Majesty.

THE CLERK. If I could urge consideration on you! Think of the instability of thrones in modern life. Even a king must be orderly or he jeopardizes his throne.

JANUARY. What does he mean?

SOL. I can only imagine, my dear, that he is talking about that quaint little planet, the Earth. [*He begins to take JANUARY off.*]

JUNE. Never mind him. But it seems to me that I— that I shall do very well without you.

[*That refers to KING FROST, who, as SOL goes, naturally with his back turned, enters L., keeping step with SOL. FROST is in glittering white.*]

SOL [*turning, and as he turns FROST shrinks back*]. Oh! Oh, it's that craven fellow who never looked me in the eyes in his life for more than a fraction of time.

[*From the same side as FROST, enters DECEMBER, who appears to be dressed wholly in veils.*]

DECEMBER [*holding up her arm, from which veiling trails, to protect FROST*]. I offer you my mists to shield you from his fire.

FROST. Thank you, December. I'm touched by your constancy, but I rather wish you hadn't chosen to follow me just now.

DECEMBER. Is it nothing to you that I let Sol dry my mists for you? I suffer and you do not care.

JUNE. Personally, I don't know why you're here at all, December. If everybody had their rights, this is my ground.

SOL. Oh, you can keep your mists, December. [*Turns*

## HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE

*away with JANUARY.*) It isn't worth the trouble of dissolving Frost. I can see that those ladies are going to give him a sufficiently uncomfortable time. [*Takes JANUARY off.*]

DECEMBER [*to JUNE*]. I came because he [*that is, FROST*] came.

FROST. I'm certainly very fond of you, December. But be reasonable. Do remember how very rarely I have an opportunity to see June.

DECEMBER. Why should you ever have the opportunity to

JUNE. Because I want to be made pale and romantic, and Frost can do that to my burnt-up face. You winter months, you dark ladies of the mists and the long nights, you have all the mystery and it isn't fair. Why must I never veil my face except sometimes in the early morning when nobody is awake to know that I, too, have my mystery? I want King Frost to touch my lips with his and—

DECEMBER. I consider you a very brazen month. I certainly shall not allow Frost to come near you.

FROST. My dear December, this is jealousy. What possible harm can it do if I oblige June by kissing her?

THE CLERK. In the World it—

JUNE [*pushing him away*]. We've heard quite enough about the World. If you try to interfere again I shall ask Frost to bite your nose. Even December will not object to that.

DECEMBER. Oh, no. I never interfere with Frost's sporting recreations. [*The clerk retreats again, in great alarm.*]

FROST. As a matter of fact, my dear December, you know very little of what I do on three hundred and thirty-four days of the year.

DECEMBER. I shut my eyes to you and January, but I know more than you think. I know you go riding on the winds of March and how you turn the rain of April into hail. And at May—

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

FROST [*in alarm*]. You've not been talking to May?

DECEMBER. I got it out of her, you wretch. But May is past and June is present, and let me tell you that June is no month for you.

JUNE. Oh! Who are you to make the laws for Frost? Who are you to say whose month I am?

FROST. Really, my dear December, love you as I do at the fitting time, it is not you who keep me and June apart. It's Sol.

JUNE. And Sol is not here now, Frost.

FROST [*taking her hand and about to embrace her*]. I think we understand each other very well, my dear.

[*But he does not quite embrace, still less kiss, JUNE, because SOL is not the only adversary of FROST, and just now a voice is heard singing and a jolly fellow called RAIN enters with FEBRUARY on one arm and AUGUST on the other.*

JUNE. Frost, what ails you?

FROST. I feel a weakness. I——

[*RAIN is here conceived as an impish creature of whims and shrews rather than as a determined blackness: a Jack Point sort of a fellow, in Jack Point sort of costume suitably shaded to grey. AUGUST is decked with sunflowers; FEBRUARY has snowdrops. RAIN's snatch of song is "Begone, dull care."*

JUNE [*stamping her foot*]. Oh, you trespass! You trespass on my very ground.

[*She means the months trespass, but if two ladies are on a gentleman's arm it is difficult to indicate that it is decidedly they, and decidedly not he, who are intruding.*

RAIN. I ask nobody where I fall.

JUNE. You, dear Rain, dear washer of my face, I do not

## HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE

speak to you, but— [*Looks angrily at FEBRUARY and AUGUST.*]

RAIN. Only my playmates, June. My merry month of August, my naughty month, my laughing rainbow of a month, you wouldn't part me from my playmate August? And February, my faithful fill-dyke February, why, if February's on my arm, on whose arm should she be but mine?

FROST [*now at a distance from RAIN*]. And I am all alone, June.

DECEMBER [*going to him*]. You needn't be. ●

FROST. But June has asked a favour of me. June has a craving to be pale of face, to be mysterious and interesting, and by the magic of my lips I can bleach the colour which too much companionship of Sol has put upon her cheeks.

[*So DECEMBER stands off from FROST. At the moment she kisses him thoroughly.*]

FEBRUARY. Oh, would that I could have June's place in the Sun's regard! I do hate to be called fill dyke.

RAIN. That is hardly polite to me, February, my dear. I'm a good friend to every month there is, but you're the last month to complain of my inconstancy.

FEBRUARY. It's your constancy I complain of. When I see the other months with their flowers and their fruit I could weep.

AUGUST. You are always weeping. You have no discretion. Now, I watch that sunny little planet they call Earth. It's a plaything of mine.

RAIN. And of mine.

AUGUST. Yes, you and I together, Rain, we have made some pretty mischief with the Earth's holiday season.

FEBRUARY. I don't care. I want roses. I'm the littlest month, and I want roses.

FROST [*getting her some roses*]. Don't cry or you'll spoil them.

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

THE CLERK. Roses for February! I absolutely must present. Ladies, you all know as well as I do that:

"All the months of the year  
Curse a fair Februeer."

*[The clerk watches the effect of this, then sits by W. SMITH.]*

RAIN. That is perfectly true. Give those roses back to June, my dear.

FEBRUARY. Oh, everybody bullies me because I'm short.  
O *[She returns the roses.]*

RAIN. That's a good little month.

FEBRUARY. Little! Little! I won't be treated like a child.

FROST. I beg your pardon, Rain, but couldn't you ask your particular friends carry on your arguments elsewhere?

*[He stands L., well apart from RAIN.]*

RAIN. I feel quite at home. I'm at home everywhere.

FROST. Then anywhere will do. If you can't take a hint, let me tell you that June and I have business of a private nature.

RAIN. I noticed that Sol wasn't here.

JUNE. And I don't see the necessity for you to take his place.

RAIN. I very frequently displace him.

FROST. At the moment, strictly at the moment, you are unwelcome here.

JUNE. Yes.

RAIN. I hope I am a gentleman, June. If I could believe that you prefer the harsh embraces of Frost to my soft caresses, I should immediately withdraw, but I never believe the incredible. It's a principle of mine.

JUNE. Why is it incredible that I want to be kissed by Frost?

## HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE

DECEMBER. It is not incredible, Rain. Shall I tell you why she wants that kiss?

RAIN. Midsummer-madness, I presume.

DECEMBER. No, cunning, her amorous cunning, her——

JUNE. Oh! Is there no honour amongst months? Will you betray my secret?

DECEMBER. Will you cease trying to steal Frost from me?

JUNE. I say that Frost does not belong to you.

FROST. I don't, and December knows it, too. She was telling me only to-day.

DECEMBER. Then listen, Rain. She wants Frost only that his touch of ice may make her sweeter for the Sun. It is Sol she loves, not you. It is for Sol she wishes to rise pale and languishing from the embrace of Frost.

RAIN (*looking at FROST*). Is this true?

FROST. I don't mind if it is. I can't pretend that I'm at my full strength just now, but I think I might be allowed to kiss June without all this organized opposition.

RAIN. Don't you understand that I came here to kiss her myself? And I *don't* want her pale and languishing after you have tried to make an ice month of her. Besides, she can't be leasy if you kiss her and she can't be leasy unless I kiss her.

JUNE. Why must I be leasy at all?

RAIN. It's your duty to be leasy. I like cushions when I sit.

FROST. Then I'll chest you of your cushions early. You, there! October, November!

[OCTOBER and NOVEMBER enter L., the one with JUNE, the other with TERRIE]

I have my months, Rain.

RAIN. My dear fellow, every month is a month of mine.

FROST. I challenge you on that. [*To OCTOBER and NOVEMBER*] Bring me September here.

[*Exit*]



ONE OF THE ASPECTS OF TODAY

you can't blame the FBI for it. I don't really want to  
say that, but I know as well as I do that:

"We are the month of the year  
 (a we are) balance"

[The case was the subject of this, that and by  
which]

... That's a perfect one. Give those ones back  
[unclear] ... because I'm the

... 10%, everything half of me because I'm that  
(5% reserve for the future)

4. That's a good little mouth  
smiling little! little! I won't be treated like  
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most I beg your pardon, Raim, but couldn't you  
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[He stands L, well apart from the group]

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JUNE. I say that Frost does not belong to you.

FROST. I don't, and December knows it, too. She was telling me only to-day.

DECEMBER. Then listen, Rain. She wants Frost only that his touch of ice may make her sweeter for the Sun. It is Sol she loves, not you. It is for Sol she wishes to rise pale and languishing from the embrace of Frost.

RAIN (*looking at FROST*). Is this true?

FROST. I don't mind if it is. I can't pretend that I'm at my full strength just now, but I think I might be allowed to kiss June without all this organized opposition.

RAIN. Don't you understand that I came here to kiss her myself? And I *don't* want her pale and languishing after you have tried to make an ice-month of her. Besides, she can't be leafy if you kiss her and she can't be leafy unless I kiss her.

JUNE. Why must I be leafy at all?

RAIN. It's your duty to be leafy. I like cushions when I fall.

FROST. Then I'll cheat you of your cushions early. You, there! October, November!

[OCTOBER and NOVEMBER enter L., the one with yew, the other with berries.

I have my months, Rain.

RAIN. My dear fellow, every month is a month of mine.

FROST. I challenge you on that. [*To OCTOBER and NOVEMBER*] Bring me September here. [*They go.*

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

RAIN. You claim September! Absurd.

FROST. In the absence of Sol I claim every month that is.

DECEMBER [*warning him, because really she loves FROST*]. Sol has not gone far away, Frost. He will return.

[*Enter SEPTEMBER, led by OCTOBER and NOVEMBER.*]

FROST [*waving DECEMBER away and speaking to SEPTEMBER*]. When your time comes to stand upon this ground, September, I shall be here. The leaves are to fall early, the harvest to be ruined, and you yourself to be, for all the thirty days <sup>Of</sup> you, my slave.

[*RAIN and these three months are to the L.*]

SEPTEMBER. Sol will protect me.

FROST. Sol has abdicated. Sol's lost his liking for the nut-brown months and fondles January. I! I am lord of the summer now.

RAIN. I hope you don't take this braggart seriously, September?

SEPTEMBER. I know you can wash him away from me.

FROST [*to RAIN*]. And will that do your leafy cushions any good when September is on the ground? The more you fall, the more you'll wash the leaves from the branches and the more you'll rot the crops. And later, with October's aid, I'll dry you up and freeze you.

RAIN. Not with October. It's too early, isn't it, sweetheart? [*Going to her.*]

OCTOBER [*toasting her head*]. You're everybody's lover, Rain. And Sol is very languid with me. I think if Frost would promise to be strong, that he and I——

FROST. It is the will which makes us strong, October. You and I both willing, girl, and what a month I'd make of you! [*Looks at SEPTEMBER.*] And of you, September.

SEPTEMBER [*coolly*]. You might. I don't know you very well, of course, but you ~~are~~ handsome.

## HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE

FROST [*by her*]. And handsome is as handsome loves, my pretty.

RAIN. This is growing serious. You, there? July! *[JULY, decked with lupin, enters from R.]*

FROST. The sun-month to your aid! You must feel in a desperate case, Rain.

RAIN. July!

JULY. Oh, I am cold. Keep him busy. *[Sinking from FROST.]*

RAIN. You're safe with me.

FROST. The one month who is safe and she not always. *[Makes a feint towards her.]*

JULY. Oh! I want the Sun. *[Hiding from FROST behind RAIN.]*

JUNE. Pampered weakling!

*[Our splendid flaming JUNE!]*

JULY. I hope Frost is nothing to you, June!

JUNE. Baby! A touch of Frost is stimulating to the strong. *[The Amazon!]*

DECEMBER. You know he'll turn you pale. You want to be turned pale.

FROST. My dear December, I'd been forgetting you. Your place is over here, with me.

DECEMBER. But I—

FROST. Come. *[She crosses to L.]* Rain and I are marshalling our months. He claimed a hold on every one of you. *[Looking proudly at his squad]* We seem so far to be equal, Rain.

NOVEMBER. I—

FROST. Well?

NOVEMBER. I like Rain. I don't care who knows it.

RAIN. Is there by any chance a mutiny in your army, Frost?

FROST *[to NOVEMBER, seizing her roughly]*. You shall have

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

as much or as little of Rain as I allow. I am your master,  
November.

NOVEMBER (*crosses*). Yes.

FROST (*swaggering*). That ends that mutiny. Now, Rain,

have you any hope that May is a month of yours?

RAIN. You claim May! You grow audacious.

FROST. Oh, but May and I have met by moonlight, and  
in the misty dawn we've had those stolen hours which are  
the sweetest of the sweet.

THE CLERK. That explains the advice in the *Book of the  
Wedder*:

"Ne'er cast a clout  
Till May is out."

*[Only this time, he doesn't interfere: he merely speaks  
to MISS SMITH.]*

RAIN (*looks off R. and calls*). May! May!

*[And MAY, the faithless, does not come to his calling.]*

*RAIN has the feeling of an awkward pause and  
you in the audience begin to think there's a stage  
wait.*

FROST ( *scoffing*). Try April if you want anything to  
happen.

RAIN. But May is later than April.

FROST. Ah! The later the sweeter. Now let me try.  
May! May!

*[And at his call MAY comes, decked with hawthorn, and  
MAY is, perhaps, a bit of a flirt.]*

MAY. My lover of the dawn!

*[She comes from the R., and RAIN intercepts her as she  
goes L.]*

RAIN. You're not going to put a few odd half-hours in  
front of all the time you've spent with me!

MAY. Oh, but it seemed so wicked, so deliciously wicked,  
to kiss King Frost while Sol was getting up!

## HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE

RAIN. But I'm an early riser myself. In fact, I often stay out all night.

MAY. I know. I was so used to you.

RAIN. Are you telling me I'm commonplace?

MAY. Not when you make the rainbows.

RAIN. I can only do that when Sol is there.

MAY. Yes, Rain. I either like two lovers at once or else one [*looks at FROST*] who is not commonplace. [*So she crosses to FROST.*]

RAIN. I! I a commonplace! [*His distress is pitiable.*]

FROST. And five months are mine, Rain. [*He embraces MAY possessively.*]

RAIN [*goes R. and says softly*]. April, my April!

FROST [*to his months*]. Not daring to command, the fellow begs her to appear.

[*Enter APRIL R., decked with celandine.*]

APRIL. You called, my king.

[*She kneels to RAIN, who looks proudly at FROST.*]

FROST. You may have your little triumph.

MAY. Slavish, I call her.

FROST. And as to March, my fellow, as to March?

RAIN. I trust the lusty maid. March! March!

[*Enter MARCH R., decked with daffodils.*]

FROST. I also am here, March.

AUGUST. Whom do you favour, March? Sol is away, and which in his absence is your choice between these two?

[*MARCH steps towards FROST.*]

FROST. Ah!

MARCH [*berating C.*]. But that is when I come in like a lion.

FROST. Be lion-hearted to the end.

MARCH [*a step towards RAIN*]. But I go out like a lamb.

FEBRUARY. What are you like on the odd day?

MARCH. The odd day?

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

FEBRUARY. Yes.

"Thirty days have September, April, June and November,  
All the rest have thirty-one——"

and the only consolation of my blighted life is that I have more of that verse than anyone else. You have thirty-one days, March, and I ask you, are you a lion or a lamb on the odd day?

FROST. Yes: which are you then?

MARCH. I'm blown about too much to know.

RUN. But I am in the wind.

FROST. And I.

MARCH. Yes. And very bracing you are, Frost. I think if I could choose about the odd day that I should choose you.

FROST. Oh! *(Comes over and takes her L.)* A lusty maid, he called you, and you knew who gave you strength. Six months, Rain. Six of the twelve are mine and January——

RAIN. Oh, January!

FROST. A month of mine if ever month was mine.

DECEMBER. After me, I think, Frost.

FROST. Or are you eleven after her?

RAIN. Sol must have taken January very far. I don't feel my usual self at all. I'm feeling sleepy.

FROST. I gain upon you every minute.

RAIN. I begin to think that it's a case for compromise *(Scratches head.)* What can I do to bring Sol back? *(He turns to his months.)*

JUNE *(bitterly)*. Do nothing, Rain, do nothing and in very little while your power to keep me prisoner from Frost will go.

RAIN. Well, if that isn't just like a war! I'd forgotten what the war was about. You wanted to be kissed by Frost didn't you?

FEBRUARY. For love of Sol, Rain. Don't forget that.

## HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE

RAIN. I know, my dear, but I shall get an exceedingly bad chill if this contention is prolonged. Besides, if Sol is going to fall in love with June again as soon as Frost has kissed the warmth from her cheeks, Frost's powers will be cut away. Oh, I don't think it's a surrender on my part to let her kiss him. I don't even call it a compromise. I call it a *ruse de guerre*, and I put it in French so that only months of superior education will understand how clever I'm being. Frost certainly won't understand. He's a rude fellow.

MARCH. Excuse me. Not rude. Robust.

RAIN. I accept the amendment. I'll accept any amendment of this chill. I shall stiffen into hail in a minute. Frost, my dear fellow, do I remember your mentioning a wish to kiss June?

FROST. Is there any other issue between us at the moment?

RAIN. Dear me! I'd forgotten you were making a point of it. Granted, of course, my dear Frost. A trifle. Don't thank me.

FROST. I thank my Zero for it.

RAIN. You may be right. If Zero is your totem, by all means thank him, but for water's sake do hurry. I've ramrods in every limb.

JUNE. Frost! My lover at last!

*[FROST comes towards her, and the nearer he comes the stiffer RAIN appears. FROST and JUNE meet C. and they go off together L.]*

THE CLERK. Frost and June! Oh, suffering Earth!

*[Nobody takes any notice of him except MISS SMITH.]*

DECEMBER *[watching FROST go]*. And my feelings are nothing to anybody. That brazen hussy!

MAY. If it comes to that, what about you? You meet Frost at midday yourself. I am at least discreet.

RAIN. Oh! *[Stretching his stiff limbs]* I creak, but suppleness returns to me. That's better. *[So much better]*



# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

that he casts a master's eye on the months who were frost's a minute ago and he shakes a fist under MAY's nose.] May, you're a minx!

MAY [curtsying impudently]. Thank you, sir. And may Sol defend me from too much of you.

THE CLERK. Oh, yes! Yes, indeed. At last that is a sentiment I can applaud.

RAIN. And as for you, September—

SEPTEMBER. Be careful what you say to me, Rain.

RAIN. I shall say that I consider it exceedingly forward in you to admire Frost.

SEPTEMBER. Very well, if you want cushions to fall on, Frost and I will see to it that the leaves fall early and—

RAIN. Then I shall only fall on the rhododendrons. But I don't believe a word of it. There isn't a month amongst you could get on without me, and you have me when my fancy turns upon you.

[And so, rather vaingloriously it might be thought for an element in defeat, he beckons the MONTHS armed him, gets as many as he can on each arm and sing.]

[Singing "Begone, dull care," with slight variation.

"Begone, Jack Frost,  
I prithee begone from me.  
Begone, hard Ice,  
You and I shall never agree.  
Long time hast thou been tarrying  
here

And fain thou would'st me kill,  
But i' faith, bleak Frost,  
Thou never shalt have thy will.

Too much hoar Frost  
Will make the Earth turn grey,

## HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE

And too much cold  
Will turn an old man to clay.  
My months shall dance and I will sing,  
So merrily pass the day,  
For I hold it one of the wisest things  
To drive Jack Frost away."

[FROST and JUNE re-enter L., and such is the magic of  
his kiss that, indeed, she is no longer sunburnt.

JUNE [dropping to ground]. Oh, I faint, I swoon!

DECEMBER. I knew it! I knew she could never stand the  
icy hug of Frost.

JUNE. I knew it too.

DECEMBER. You bragged of being stimulated, you spoiled  
darling of the Sun.

JUNE. That was to lure Frost to me. I wanted to be  
pale for Sol who wearied of my flaming face. But, oh, the  
ordeal by Frost!

FROST. That's a nice way to speak of a lover. She's  
been kissing me as if I were a medician. I shan't often  
make love to June. Oh!

[This "Oh!" of pain is caused by the appearance, R.,  
of SOL and JANUARY. And now it is JANUARY who is  
sunburnt and less veiled about the body than she was.

[Backing as SOL approaches.] And tan! Tan on the face of  
January!

JANUARY [coming towards him]. Frost!

FROST. But you are sunburnt. You are warm from Sol's  
embraces.

[He backs from her.

JANUARY. Frost! Inceedyou. Put back my veils about me.

DECEMBER. If you feel immodest, my dear, you have only  
yourself to blame.

FROST. At the same time, December, it is pleasant to be  
told that one is needed. I shall forgive her the immodesty

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

*that he casts a master's eye on the months who were Frost's minute ago and he shakes a fist under MAY's nose.] May, you're a minx!*

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 Long time hast thou been tarrying  
 Here  
 And fain thou would'st me kill,  
 I' faith, Uless Frost,  
 never shalt have thy will.

Adieu Frost  
 &c Earth turn grey,

## HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE

And too much cold  
Will turn an old man to clay.  
My months shall dance and I will sing,  
So merrily pass the day,  
For I hold it one of the wisest things  
To drive Jack Frost away."

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*[This "Oh!" of pain is caused by the appearance, R., of SOL and JANUARY. And now it is JANUARY who is sunburnt and less veiled about the body than she was.]*

*[Backing as SOL approaches.]* And tan! Tan on the face of January!

JANUARY *[coming towards him]*. Frost!

FROST. But you are sunburnt. You are warm from Sol's embraces.

*[He backs from her.]*

JANUARY. Frost! I need you. Put back my veils about me.

DECEMBER. If you feel immodest, my dear, you have only yourself to blame.

FROST. At the same time, December, it is pleasant to be told that one is needed. I shall forgive her the immodesty

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

of a face which is not only blantly brown, but shamelessly unveiled.

JANUARY *[going to him]*. My lord!

FROST. There, child, there!

*[He veils her face. They are carefully remote from*

SOL.

SOL *[at last seeing JUNE, who, poor lady, has been making appealing gestures to him from the ground]*. June! That's never June!

JUNE. It is.

SOL. Pale of face and drooping? That isn't like my gorgeous June.

JUNE. You didn't want me to be like your gorgeous June. You said you wanted me pale.

SOL. Did I say that? What a king I am! My mere expression of a whim to have you pale turns you pale.

*[The other MONTHS cough behind their hands.]*  
What is this epidemic? I have always considered myself fatal to coughs.

JULY. Oh, you are, Majesty, undoubtedly.

SOL *[glaring at the now self-conscious MONTHS]*. I am glad to be reassured.

FROST *[feeling at a safe distance]*. Kings are always reassured.

SOL. I shall turn my face to you.

FROST. Mercy, King!

JUNE. Your arms, Sol! I am fainting for your arms.

SOL. Just one moment, June. I have to glare at Frost.  
*[He does, and FROST shrinks from him and slinks off L.]* That settles him!

JUNE. Raise me to the glowing splendour of your kingly eyes.

SOL *[banding her up]*. You are a faithful creature, June.

JUNE *[romantically]*. To bask in your light, again.

## HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE

SOL. I will shine on you for ever. [RAIN laughs and SOL looks at him.] Or nearly for ever. [Taking her off R., and saying as they go:] That fellow who laughed. Yes, he's the Court barber, you know, and one allows these liberties. I have him round to make rainbows to comb your hair.

JUNE. You master of all!

SOL. That is as true as the Moon, my dear.

[Exit SOL and JUNE.]

RAIN [sings. Air, "The Vicar of Bray"—because that vicar, also, was various in his loves and constant to his office. RAIN sings the first four lines as if addressing SOL].

"Oh, what about November days  
When Earth is full of joy, sire?  
Say, is it just retiring ways  
Or fear to damp your sun-fire?  
And though in spring-time lad and lass  
Speed duly forth to chatter  
The sunshine rarely comes to pass  
But I'm all pit, pit, patter!"

CROOKS.

"And this is the law that I'll (he'll) declare  
Until my (his) dying day, sir,  
That howsoever Sol may glare  
I follow (he follows) him with my (his) spray, sir."

RAIN. "The time I love the most of all  
Is England's months of cricket,  
'Tis then in bucketfuls I fall  
And ruin every wicket,  
For Rain shall reign the whole year out,  
Sing hey-bo for rheumatics,  
And mushrooms, ducks and tadpoles sprout  
While Sol hides in his attics."

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

CHORUS. "And this is the law that I'll declare," etc.

[*Exeunt RAIN and MONTHS.*

[*As RAIN and the MONTHS go out the CLERK rises, and addresses MISS SMITH as if she were at a public meeting.*

THE CLERK. And that, madam, is the reply to your question: that is how the weather is made.

[*But he is, you recall, an Oxford man, and so it is, perceiving MISS SMITH to be about to rise, he gallantly assists her.*

Pray allow me.

MISS SMITH. Thank you.

[*And now she is on her feet, receiving from him her umbrella and her Burberry.*

THE CLERK. You don't by any chance feel that you owe me something coloured like an apology? [*She doesn't, so he reminds her.*] You remember your suggestion that I knew nothing about the weather?

MISS SMITH. I'm certainly thankful that I have not had to use this.

[*Which is her umbrella—and we hope that is what she says. But weather is weather, and if this play is being performed out of doors, MISS SMITH may have to say something regrettably different. She won't, of course, have used her own umbrella, because that would mark the MONTHS and would be impolite. But other people may have had to use theirs, and in that case what MISS SMITH says is: "I know that it is never safe to come out without an umbrella—even on the most suspicious occasions."*

BUT—[*that is, if it has been fine, and "and" if it hasn't*—you don't seem to be able to control the weather in the least.

THE CLERK. That is only too true, and only too easy of explanation. The months should have been men, but they are women, and I also can control the rage of a woman!

## HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE

MISS SMITH. Are you being rude?

THE CLERK. No: but I'm experienced.

MISS SMITH. I think your experience is quite local, Mr Clerk. There are parts of the world where the sun shines by the calendar. I'm very much inclined to go West.

THE CLERK. Where to?

MISS SMITH. Well, California, for instance.

THE CLERK. Oh, no! No! Please don't do that.

MISS SMITH. Why not?

THE CLERK. Because they have a settled sky and an unsettled earth and——

MISS SMITH. Pooh! You're trying to frighten me with fairy-tales.

THE CLERK. No, I'm not. Look here, couldn't we go somewhere and have tea together? Then we can thrash it all out, and I'll—I'll tell you why I don't want you to go to California.

MISS SMITH. I don't think you'll convince me, but I shall be charmed to come to tea.

THE CLERK [*taking her Burberry and umbrella and not caring if they do go absurdly with his fine clothes*]. Ah, but you never saw what may happen after two people have tea'd together. [*He arms her towards exit.*] By the way, did you mention our Christian name?

MISS SMITH. I didn't mention either name.

THE CLERK. But a Christian name comes first, doesn't it?

[*By this time they have reached the exit, and as everybody ought to be satisfied that they are getting on together so well that MISS SMITH won't change her skies, there is no reason why they should not make their exit. So they go out to what, we imagine, is not their last tea-partnership, and, of course, after that—— Well, there it is.*]



**C**

# THE GOLDEN DOOM

BY LORD DUNSANY

## CHARACTERS

THE KING

THE KING'S CHAMBERLAIN

THE CHIEF PROPHET

TWO PROPHETS

TWO SENTRYS

THREE SPIES

A BOY

A GIRL

A STRANGER

SOLDIERS, ATTENDANTS, ETC.

*TIME. Some while before the fall of Babylon.*

WHILE in fiction Lord Dunsany has moved from short stories of a dreaming and barbaric East to long chronicles of romantic Spain, he is one of the few writers who, ignoring the refractory West-End managers, continues to express himself in the form of the one-act play. Occasionally these plays are so short as to be comparable, in their brevity and their witty making of a single point, with the better sort of revue sketches. But generally they are fastidiously worded specimens of decorative drama, distinguished beyond most modern work for their audacious imagination. Sometimes they are ferocious conflicts of gods with men; sometimes the rollicking Irish humour which inspired "A Story of Land and Sea" will lead, through comedy, to a gentler conclusion. It is the strange East of Lord Dunsany's inventing which lends colour to the following play. In "The Golden Doorn," as in all he does, a highly individual artist is at work.

# THE GOLDEN DOOM<sup>1</sup>

*SCENE: Outside the KING's great door in Zericon. Two SENTRIES pace to and fro, then halt, one on each side of the great door.*

FIRST SENTRY. The day is deadly sultry.

SECOND SENTRY. I would that I were swimming down the Rhone, on the cool side, under the fruit-trees.

FIRST SENTRY. It is like to thunder, or the fall of a rusty.

SECOND SENTRY. It will grow cool by nightfall. Where the King!

FIRST SENTRY. He rows in his golden barge with ambassadors or whispers with captains concerning future wars. He stars spare him.

SECOND SENTRY. Why do you say "the stars spare him"?

FIRST SENTRY. Because if a doom from the stars fall suddenly on a king it swallows up his people and all things round about him, and his palace falls and the walls of his city and citadel, and the apes come in from the woods and the large beasts from the desert so that you would not say that a king had been there at all.

SECOND SENTRY. But why should a doom from the stars fall on the King?

<sup>1</sup> Published by Messrs G. P. Putnam's Sons (paper covers, 1s. 6d.). Applications regarding amateur performances of this play could be addressed to Messrs Samuel French, Ltd., 25 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, or 25 West 45th Street, New York.

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

FIRST SENTRY. Because he seldom placates them.

SECOND SENTRY. Ah, I have heard that said of him.

FIRST SENTRY. Who are the stars that a man should scorn them. Should they that rule the thunder, the plague, and the earthquake withhold these things save for much prayer? Always ambassadors are with the King, and his commanders come in from distant lands, prefects of cities and makers of the laws, but never the priests of the stars.

SECOND SENTRY. Hark! Was that thunder?

FIRST SENTRY. Believe me, the stars are angry.

[Enter a STRANGER. He wanders towards the KING's door, gazing about him.

SENTRIES [lifting their spears at him]. Go back! Go back!

STRANGER. Why?

FIRST SENTRY. It is death to touch the King's door.

STRANGER. I am a stranger from Thessaly.

FIRST SENTRY. It is death even for a stranger.

STRANGER. Your door is strangely sacred.

FIRST SENTRY. It is death to touch it.

[STRANGER wanders off. Enter two children hand in hand.

BOY [to SENTRY]. I want to see the King to pray for a hoop. [SENTRY smiles.

BOY [pushes the door, to GIRL]. I cannot open it. [To SENTRY] Will it do as well if I pray to the King's door?

SENTRY. Yes, quite as well. [Turns to talk to the other SENTRY.] Is there anyone in sight?

SECOND SENTRY [shading his eyes]. Nothing but a dog, and he far out on the plain.

FIRST SENTRY. Then we can talk awhile and eat bask.

BOY. King's door, I want a little hoop.

[The SENTRIES take a little bath between finger and

## THE GOLDEN DOOM

*thumb from pouches and put that wholly forgotten  
drug to their lips.*

GIRL [*pointing*]. My father is a taller soldier than that.

BOY. My father can write. He taught me.

GIRL. Ho! Writing frightens nobody: my father is a soldier.

BOY. I have a lump of gold. I found it in the stream that runs down to Gyshou.

GIRL. I have a poem. I found it in my own head.

BOY. Is it a long poem?

GIRL. No. But it would have been only there were no more rhymes for sky.

BOY. What is your poem?

GIRL. "I saw a purple bird  
Go up against the sky,  
And it went up and up  
And round about did fly."

BOY. I saw it die.

GIRL. That doesn't scan.

BOY. Oh, that doesn't matter.

GIRL. Do you like my poem?

BOY. Birds aren't purple.

GIRL. My bird was.

BOY. Oh!

GIRL. Oh, you don't like my poem.

BOY. Yes, I do.

GIRL. No, you don't; you think it horrid.

BOY. No, I don't.

GIRL. Yes, you do. Why didn't you say you liked it?  
It is the only poem I ever made.

BOY. I do like it. I do like it.

GIRL. You don't, you don't.

BOY. Don't be angry. I'll write it on the door for you.

AL. You'll write it!

Y. Yes, I can write. My father taught me. I'll write it with my lump of gold. It makes a yellow mark on the iron door.

AL. Oh, do write it. I would like to see it written like poetry. [BOY begins to write. GIRL watches him.]

1ST SENTRY. You see, we'll be fighting again soon.

2ND SENTRY. Only a little war. We never have more than a little war with the hill-folk.

1ST SENTRY. When a man goes to fight the curtains of the gods war thicker than ever before between his past and the future, he may go to a great or to a little war.

2ND SENTRY. There can only be a little war with the hill-folk.

1ST SENTRY. Yet sometimes the gods laugh.

2ND SENTRY. At whom?

1ST SENTRY. At kings.

2ND SENTRY. Why have you grown uneasy about this hill-folk?

1ST SENTRY. Because the King is powerful beyond any father, and has more fighting men, more horses, more wealth than could have ransomed his father and grandfather and dowered their queens and daughters; every year his miners bring him more from the opal mines and from the turquoise quarries. He has grown mighty.

2ND SENTRY. Then he will the more easily crush the hill-folk in a little war.

1ST SENTRY. When kings grow very mighty the stars grow very jealous.

AL. I have written your poem.

Y. Oh, have you really?

AL. Yes, I'll read it to you.

## THE GOLDEN DOOM

[*Reads*] "I saw a purple bird  
Go up against the sky,  
And it went up and up  
And round about did fly,  
I saw it die."

GIRL. It doesn't scan.

BOY. That doesn't matter.

[*Enter furtively a spy, he crosses stage, exit. The sentries cease to talk.*]

GIRL. That man frightens me.

BOY. He is only one of the King's spies.

GIRL. But I don't like the King's spies. They frighten me.

BOY. Come on then, we'll run away.

SENTRY [noticing children again]. Go away, go away.  
The King is coming, he will eat you.

[BOY throws a stone at the SENTRY and exit. Enter another spy, he crosses the stage. Enter third spy, he notices the door. Examines it and utters an owl-like whistle. No. 2 comes back. They do not speak. Both whistle. No. 3 comes. All examine the door. Enter the KING and his CHAMBERLAIN. The KING wears a purple robe. SENTRYs smartly transfer their spears to their left hands and return their right arms to their right sides. They then lower their spears until their points are within an inch of the ground, at the same time raising their right hands above their heads. They stand for some moments thus. Then they lower their right arms to their right sides at the same time raising their spears. In the next motion they take their spears into their right hands and lower the butts to the floor where they were before, the spears slanting forward a little. Both sentries must move together precisely.]



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

FIRST SPY [*runs forward to the KING and kneels abasing his forehead to the floor, log.*]. Something has written on the iron door.

CHAMBERLAIN. On the iron door!

KING. Some fool has done it. Who has been here since yesterday?

FIRST SENTRY [*shifts his hand a little higher on his spear, brings the spear to his side and closes his heels all in one motion, he then takes one pace backwards with his right foot, then he kneels on his right knee. When he has done this he speaks, but not before.*]. Nobody, Majesty, but a stranger from Thessaly.

KING. Did he touch the iron door?

FIRST SENTRY. No, Majesty; he tried to, but we drove him away.

KING. How near did he come?

FIRST SENTRY. Nearly to our spears, Majesty.

KING. What was his motive in seeking to touch the iron door?

FIRST SENTRY. I do not know, Majesty.

KING. Which way did he go?

FIRST SENTRY [*pointing left*]. That way, Majesty, an hour ago.

[*The KING whispers with one of his spies, who stoops and examines the ground and steals away. SENTRY first.*

KING [*to his two remaining spies*]. What does this writing say?

A SPY. We cannot read, Majesty.

KING. A good spy should know everything.

SECOND SPY. We watch, Majesty, and we search out, Majesty. We read shadows, and we read footprints, and whisper in secret places. But we do not read writing.

KING [*to CHAMBERLAIN*]. See what it is.

CHAMBERLAIN [*goes up and reads*]. It is treason, Majesty.

## THE GOLDEN DOOM

KING. Read it.

CHAMBERLAIN.

"I saw a purple bird  
Go up against the sky,  
And it went up and up  
And round about did fly.  
I saw it die."

FIRST SENTRY [*aside*]. The stars have spoken.

KING [*to SENTRY*]. Has anyone been here but the stranger from Thessaly?

SENTRY [*kneeling as before*]. Nobody, Majesty.

KING. You saw nothing?

FIRST SENTRY. Nothing but a dog far out upon the plain and the children of the guard at play.

KING [*to SECOND SENTRY*]. And you?

SECOND SENTRY [*kneeling*]. Nothing, Majesty.

CHAMBERLAIN. That is strange.

KING. It is some secret warning.

CHAMBERLAIN. It is treason.

KING. It is from the stars.

CHAMBERLAIN. No, no, Majesty. Not from the stars, not from the stars. Some man has done it. Yet the thing should be interpreted. Shall I send for the prophets of the stars?

[*The king beckons to his spies. They run up to him.*]

KING. Find me some prophet of the stars. [*Exeunt spies.*] I fear that we may go no more, my chamberlain, along the winding ways of unequalled Zericon, nor play dahoori with the golden balls. I have thought more of my people than of the stars and more of Zericon than of windy heaven.

CHAMBERLAIN. Believe me, Majesty, some idle man has written it and passed by. Your spies shall find him, and then his name will be soon forgotten.

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

KING. Yes, yes. Perhaps you are right, though the  
centuries saw no one. No doubt some beggar did it.

CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, Majesty, some beggar has surely done  
it. But look, here come two prophets of the stars. They  
shall tell us that this is idle.

[Enter two PROPHETS, a BOY attending them. All  
bow deeply to the KING. The two spirits steal in  
again and stand at back.]

KING. Some beggar has written a rhyme on the iron gate,  
and as the ways of rhyme are known to you I desired you,  
rather as poets than as prophets, to say whether there was  
any meaning in it.

CHAMBERLAIN. 'Tis but an idle rhyme.

FIRST PROPHET [bows again and goes up to the door. He  
glances at the writing, lol.] Come hither, servant of those  
that serve the stars.

FIRST PROPHET. Bring hither our golden cloaks, for this  
may be a matter for repining; and bring our green cloaks  
also, for this may tell of young new beautiful things with  
which the stars will one day gladden the King; and bring  
our black cloaks also, for it may be a doom. [Exit BOY.  
PROPHET goes up to door and reads solemnly.] The stars have  
spoken.

[Re enter ATTENDANT with cloaks.]

KING. I tell you that some beggar has written this.

FIRST PROPHET. It is written in pure gold.  
[He dons the black cloak over body and head]

KING. What do the stars mean? What warning is it?

FIRST PROPHET. I cannot say. [He walks away, shaking.]

LARIMONAS. Lahee, lahee, larimonas. Election. Filab.  
Areclawat

KING [to second prophet]. Come you, then, and tell us  
what the warning is

SECOND PROPHET [goes up to door and reads]. The stars  
have spoken.  
[He dons himself in black]

## THE GOLDEN DOOM

RING. What is it? What does it mean?

SECOND PROPHET. We do not know, but it is from the stars.

CHAMBERLAIN. It is a harmless thing; there is no harm in it, Majesty. Why should not birds die?

SECOND PROPHET. Larimona. Lahee, lahee, larimona. Eleerithon. Elilab. Areeclonar.

RING. Why have the prophets covered themselves in black?

CHAMBERLAIN. They are a secret people and look for inner meanings. There is no harm in it.

RING. They have covered themselves in black.

CHAMBERLAIN. They have not spoken of any evil thing. They have not spoken of it.

RING. If the people see the prophets covered in black they will say that the stars are against me and believe that my luck has turned.

CHAMBERLAIN. The people must not know.

RING. Some prophet must interpret to us the doom. Let the chief prophet of the stars be sent for.

CHAMBERLAIN [*going towards left exit*]. Summon the chief prophet of the stars that look on Zericou.

VOICES OFF. The chief prophet of the stars. The chief prophet of the stars.

CHAMBERLAIN. I have summoned the chief prophet, Majesty.

RING. If he interpret this aright I will put a necklace of turquoises round his neck with opals from the mints.

CHAMBERLAIN. He will not fail. He is a very cunning interpreter.

RING. What if he covers himself with a huge black cloak and does not speak and goes muttering away, slowly, with bended head, till our fear spreads to the sentries and they cry aloud?

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

CHAMBERLAIN. This is no doom from the stars, but some idle scribe hath written it in his insolence upon the iron door, wasting his board of gold.

KING. Not for myself I have a fear of doom, not for myself: but I inherited a rocky land, a windy and ill-nurtured, and nursed it to prosperity by years of peace and spread its boundaries by years of war. I have brought harvests up out of barren acres and given good laws unto naughty towns, and my people are happy, and lo! the stars are angry.

CHAMBERLAIN. It is not the stars, it is not the stars, Majesty, for the prophets of the stars have not interpreted it. Indeed it was only some reveller waiting his gold.

*[Meanwhile enter CHIEF PROPHET of the stars that look on Zeruion.]*

KING. Chief Prophet of the stars that look on Zeruion, I would have you interpret the rhyme upon yonder door.

CHIEF PROPHET *[goes up to the door and reads, hf.]* It is from the stars.

KING. Interpret it and you shall have great turquoises round your neck, with opals from the mines in the frozen mountains.

CHIEF PROPHET *[claps himself like the others in a great black cloak, hf.]* Who should wear purple in the land but a king, or who go up against the sky but he who has troubled the stars by neglecting their ancient worship? Such as one has gone up and up, increasing power and wealth, such as one has soared above the crowns of those that went before him, such as one the stars have doomed, the undying ones, the illustrious.

KING. Who wrote it?

CHIEF PROPHET. It is pure gold. Some god has written it.

CHAMBERLAIN. Some god?

## THE GOLDEN DOOM

CHIEF PROPHET. Some god whose home is among the undying stars.

FIRST SENTRY [*aside to second*]. Last night I saw a star go flaming earthwards.

CHIEF PROPHET. Larimonas. Lahce, lahce, larimonas. Eleerithon. Eulab. Areeclonar.

KING. Is this a warning or is it a doom?

CHIEF PROPHET. The stars have spoken.

KING. It is then a doom?

CHIEF PROPHET. They speak not in jest.

KING. I have been a great king. . . . Let it be said of me, "The stars overthrew him, and they sent a god for his doom." For I have not met my equal among kings that man should overthrow me; and I have not oppressed my people that man should rise up against me.

CHIEF PROPHET. It is better to give worship to the stars than to do good to man. It is better to be humble before the gods than proud in the face of your enemy though he do evil.

KING. Let the stars hearken yet and I will sacrifice a child to them. I will sacrifice a girl-child to the twinkling stars and a male child to the stars that blink not, the stars of the steadfast eyes. [*To his wives*] Let a boy and a girl be brought for sacrifice. [*Exit a spy right, looking at footprints.*] Will you accept this sacrifice to the god that the stars have sent? They say that the gods love children.

CHIEF PROPHET. I may refuse no sacrifice to the stars, nor to the gods whom they send. [*To other PROPHETS*] Make ready the sacrificial knives.

[*PROPHETS draw knives and sharpen them.*]

KING. Is it fitting that the sacrifice take place by the iron door where the god from the stars has trod, or must it be in the temple?

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

CHIEF PROPHET. Let it be offered by the iron door. *[To other PROPHETS]* Fetch hither the altar-stone.

*[The owl-like whistle is heard off right. Third man runs crouching towards it. Exit.]*

KING. Will this sacrifice avail to avert the doom?

CHIEF PROPHET. Who knows?

KING. I fear that even yet the doom will fall.

CHIEF PROPHET. It were wise to sacrifice some greater thing.

KING. What more can a man offer?

CHIEF PROPHET. His pride.

KING. What pride?

CHIEF PROPHET. Your pride that went up against the sky and troubled the stars.

KING. How shall I sacrifice my pride to the stars?

CHIEF PROPHET. It is upon your pride that the doom will fall, and will take away your crown and will take away your kingdom.

KING. I will sacrifice my crown and reign uncrowned amongst you, so only I save my kingdom.

CHIEF PROPHET. If you sacrifice your crown, which is your pride, and if the stars accept it, perhaps the god that they sent may avert the doom and you may still reign in your kingdom, though humbled and uncrowned.

KING. Shall I burn my crown with spices and with incense or cast it into the sea?

CHIEF PROPHET. Let it be laid here by the iron door where the god came who wrote the golden doom. When he comes again by night to shroud up the city or to pour an enemy in through the iron door he will see your cast-off pride and perhaps accept it and take it away to the neglected stars.

KING *[to chamberlain]*. Go after my spices and say that I make no sacrifice. *[Exit chamberlain, right. Talking.]*

## THE GOLDEN DOOM

*off his crown*] Good-bye, my brittle glory; kings have sought you; the stars have envied you.

*[The stage grows darker.*

CHIEF PROPHET. Even now the sun has set who denies the stars, and the day is departed wherein no gods walk abroad. It is near the hour when spirits roam the earth and all things that go unseen, and the faces of the abiding stars will be soon revealed to the fields. Lay your crown there and let us come away.

*[The KING lays his crown and sceptre before the iron door.*

KING *[to SENTRY]*. Go. And let no man come near the door all night.

SENTRY *[kneeling]*. Yes, Majesty.

*[They remain kneeling until after the KING has gone. KING and CHIEF PROPHET walk away.*

CHIEF PROPHET. It was your pride. Let it be forgotten. May the stars accept it. *[Exeunt left. The SENTRY rises.*

FIRST SENTRY. The stars have envied him!

SECOND SENTRY. It is an ancient crown. He wore it well.

FIRST SENTRY. May the stars accept it.

SECOND SENTRY. If they do not accept it what doom will overtake him?

FIRST SENTRY. It will suddenly be as though there were never any city of Zericon, nor two scotrics like you and me standing before the door.

SECOND SENTRY. Why! How do you know?

FIRST SENTRY. That is ever the way of the gods.

SECOND SENTRY. But it is unjust.

FIRST SENTRY. How should the gods know that?

SECOND SENTRY. Will it happen to-night?

FIRST SENTRY. Come, we must march away.

*[Exeunt right. The stage grows increasingly darker.*

*Re-enter CHAMBERLAIN, right. He walks across*



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

CHIEF PROPHET. Let it be offered by the iron door. [*To other PROPHETS*] Fetch hither the altar-stone.  
[*The owl-like whistle is heard off right. Third spy runs crouching towards it. Exit.*]

KING. Will this sacrifice avail to avert the doom?

CHIEF PROPHET. Who knows?

KING. I fear that even yet the doom will fall.

CHIEF PROPHET. It were wise to sacrifice some greater thing.

KING. What more can a man offer?

CHIEF PROPHET. His pride.

KING. What pride?

CHIEF PROPHET. Your pride that went up against the sky and troubled the stars.

KING. How shall I sacrifice my pride to the stars?

CHIEF PROPHET. It is upon your pride that the doom will fall, and will take away your crown and will take away your kingdom.

KING. I will sacrifice my crown and reign uncrowned amongst you, so only I save my kingdom.

CHIEF PROPHET. If you sacrifice your crown, which is your pride, and if the stars accept it, perhaps the god that they sent may avert the doom and you may still reign in your kingdom, though humbled and uncrowned.

KING. Shall I burn my crown with spices and with incense or cast it into the sea?

CHIEF PROPHET. Let it be laid here by the iron door where the god came who wrote the golden doom. When he comes again by night to shrivel up the city or to pour an enemy in through the iron door he will see your cast-off pride and perhaps accept it and take it away to the neglected stars.

KING [*to CHAMBERLAIN*]. Go after my spies and say that I make no sacrifice. [*Exit CHAMBERLAIN, right. Taking*]

## THE GOLDEN DOOM

*off his crown*) Good-bye, my brittle glory; kings have sought you; the stars have envied you.

*[The stage grows darker.*

CHIEF PROPHET. Even now the sun has set who denies the stars, and the day is departed wherein no gods walk abroad. It is near the hour when spirits roam the earth and all things that go unseen, and the faces of the abiding stars will be soon revealed to the fields. Lay your crown there and let us come away.

*[The king lays his crown and sceptre before the iron door.*

KING *[to sentries]*. Go. And let no man come near the door all night.

SENTRIES *[kneeling]*. Yes, Majesty.

*[They remain kneeling until after the king has gone. KING and CHIEF PROPHET walk away.*

CHIEF PROPHET. It was your pride. Let it be forgotten. May the stars accept it. *[Exeunt left The sentries rise.*

FIRST SENTRY. The stars have envied him!

SECOND SENTRY. It is an ancient crown. He wore it well.

FIRST SENTRY. May the stars accept it.

SECOND SENTRY. If they do not accept it what doom will overtake him?

FIRST SENTRY. It will suddenly be as though there were never any city of Zericon, nor two sentries like you and me standing before the door.

SECOND SENTRY. Why? How do you know?

FIRST SENTRY. That is ever the way of the gods.

SECOND SENTRY. But it is unjust.

FIRST SENTRY. How should the gods know that?

SECOND SENTRY. Will it happen to-night?

FIRST SENTRY. Come, we must march away.

*[Exeunt right. The stage grows increasingly darker.*

*Re-enter CHAMBERLAIN, right. He walks across*

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

*the stage. Exit left. Re-enter SPIES, right. They cross the stage. The stage is now nearly dark. Enter BOY, right, dressed in white—his hands out a little.*

BOY. King's door, King's door, I want my little hoop.

*[He goes up to the KING's door. When he sees the KING's crown there he utters a satisfied "Ob-b!" He takes it up and puts it on the ground and beating it before him with the sceptre goes out by the way that he entered. The great door opens, there is light within; a furtive SPY slips out, sees crown is gone. Another SPY slips out. Their crouching heads come close together.*

FIRST SPY *[hoarse whisper]*. The gods have come.

*[They run back through the door and the door is closed. It opens again and the KING and CHAMBERLAIN come through.*

KING. The stars are satisfied.

CURTAIN

# RORY AFORESAID

BY JOHN BRANDANE

## CHARACTERS

MACCONNACHIE, *the Court Officer*

DUNCAN MACCALLUM, *merchant and small sheep-  
farmer at Ardnish*

RORY MACCOLL, *shepherd to Mr MacCallum*

MR MACINTOSH, *an Oban lawyer*

THE SHERIFF-SUBSTITUTE, *also from Oban*

MRS MACLEAN, *a crofter widow-woman*

TIME. *The present.*

PLACE. *West Highlands.*

"Rory Aforesaid" is founded on "La Farce de  
Maître Patelin," an old French play (fifteenth century)  
of unknown authorship.

EARLY the best and most representative of the comedies," writes Mr Norman Marshall in a article on the Scottish National Theatre Society "is John Brandane's '*The Glen is Mine*,'" and general critical opinion is inclined to place that play rather higher than "*The Lusting*." With these two plays Mr Brandane becomes the acknowledged chieftain of the new Scottish school, though perhaps nothing of his quite equals the one-act tragedy "*Campbell of Kilmhor*," which is printed in the First Series of *One-Act Plays of To-day*.

"*Rory Aforesaid*" is lighter metal, being the Scottish adaptation of a humorous fifteenth-century French play "*La Farce de Maître Patelin*." It is interesting to note, incidentally, that the well-known expression *Retenons à nos mortels* had its origin in the French prototype.

John Brandane is the pseudonym of a Scottish dramatist who lives in Glasgow.

## RORY AFORESAID<sup>1</sup>

**SCENE:** *The Court-house at Torkintan, a large chamber with whitewashed walls, panelled in lower part with yellow pine. Two tall, gaunt windows at back with a door between. To the left is the judge's desk on a platform—a table for his clerk at the side of it. To the right are benches for the public. In the centre of the floor is the table for the solicitors, with chairs around it. Between the table and the right-hand side of the judge's desk is the witness-stand.*

**DUNCAN MACCALLUM**, merchant and sheep-farmer from Ard-nish, is walking up and down the empty chamber to keep himself warm, for there is an October chill in the air. He is an erect old man of sixty, with grizzled hair and beard. He wears a square-topped hat, and a muffler is wound over the collar of his stout overcoat. To him there enters the **COURT OFFICER**, **MACCOMNACHIE**, a man of fifty, with his few remaining dark hairs carefully combed in separate lines across the bald portion of his scalp. He wears a black tie, and his square-cut coat has an official look.

**COURT OFFICER.** Will you not be coming in to the fire in the waiting-room, Mr MacCallum? It's cold in this big tomb of a place.

**MACCALLUM.** No, no! I'm fine here. I want to get used

<sup>1</sup> Applications regarding amateur performances of this play should be addressed to the Scottish National Theatre Society, 240 Douglas Street, Glasgow, C 2, or to Mr Le Roy Phelps, 41 Winter Street, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

to the Court, you see. I'm forty miles from home, you understand, and I just feel like a fish out of water.

COURT OFFICER. Oh, don't be exciting yourself, now.

MACCALLUM *[looking at a yellow paper in his hand]*. What a lot of "ouch" and "afraid" they put into a summons!

COURT OFFICER. Well, that's the law, you see. When a lawyer's making a speech he feels fine if he says "afraid," every now and again.

MACCALLUM. Do you tell me now? I never thought of that! *[He reads.]* "The sheep afraid"—yes, yes—you'd think it was a very special sheep, if you said it that way. I wonder now if I could be trying that myself when I'm giving my evidence! "Rory McCall afraid." That's fine!

COURT OFFICER. Oh, now, don't you be trying any of that nonsense!

MACCALLUM. Well, I'll just be going over in my own mind what I'll be saying to the Sheriff; and then I'll feel more at home, when he comes in, you understand. This will be the witness-box!

*[He crosses to witness-stand.]*

COURT OFFICER. It is that.

MACCALLUM. There would be no harm in my standing in it for a wee minute, just to accustom myself to the way I would be feeling when my turn comes!

COURT OFFICER. No harm at all, Mr MacCallum! Go you in and welcome!

MACCALLUM. Och, you're very kind—very kind—indeed, yes. *[He goes to witness-stand, and holds up his right hand, mumbling over the words of the oath to himself, then smiles, bows, and steps down.]* Yes, yes, I'll be doing fine. All the same I'd feel easier if my lawyer was with me this day.

COURT OFFICER. And have you no lawyer then for this case?

MACCALLUM. Well, I was to have had Mr Thomson from the Oban—the young one—the good one; but the ten o'clock steamer could not take the pier this morning because

## RORY AFORESAID

of the high wind; and the poor man will have been carried on to Mallaig most likely. It's a good thing I came myself by last night's steamer.

COURT OFFICER. It's peety for Mr Thomson being taken so far out of his way.

MACCALLUM. Oh, well, it's a lawyer's life. And I'll do as well as any lawyer when it comes to the bit.

COURT OFFICER. All the same I like to see a man with his lawyer when a Court is held.

MACCALLUM. But man, man! What need of a lawyer when I saw Rory kill the sheep with my own eyes! A fine sheep it was, too—as fine a gammer as ever you saw, Mr MacConnachie.

COURT OFFICER. So I was hearing, but you're forty miles away as you say; and we didna hear much of the business at this end of the country.

*[The door at back opens, and RORY MACCOLL comes in. He is a Highland shepherd, aged sixty, and carries a stornag, or long crook of hazel. His bearded face is old and weathered, as is also his suit of rough homespun. His eyes are sharp and twinkling. At sight of him MACCALLUM turns away in disgust.]*

RORY. A fine day, Mr MacCallum.

*[MACCALLUM does not reply. RORY looks up and round the Court-house inquiringly. The COURT OFFICER goes towards him.]*

COURT OFFICER. Good day! Are you in this case?

RORY. I am that. It's a great stack of stones, this Court-house. What time will you be wanting me?

*[He hands some yellow papers to the COURT OFFICER.]*

COURT OFFICER *[reading them]*. Och! it's you, is it?—Rory MacColl. Eleven o'clock. You'll be having half an hour to wait.



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

JOAN. Half an hour! Is there an Inn in this place?  
COURT OFFICER. There is that. But if I were you, I'd  
not go near the Inn till your case is over. There's a fire  
in the waiting-room out there.

JOAN. But they'll have a fire in the Inn, too!

COURT OFFICER. I'm thinking the waiting-room fire will  
be safer for the like of you, Rory.

JOAN [grinning, as he goes out easily]. Well, I could be  
taking a look at both of them, surely.

MACCALLUM [singing]. Did you hear that? The cheek of  
him! Killing my sheep, and then wishing me a good-day,  
as cool as you like!

COURT OFFICER. So that's the man, is it? What way did  
you not have the police take him up on a criminal charge?

MACCALLUM. 'Dreed and I don't know why the police  
would not do that same, when I asked them. They just  
said there was too much sheep's-head broth in it, and  
advised me to claim for damages.

COURT OFFICER. Only a small debt case, is it? Well, well.

MACCALLUM. Aye, just that. But wait you, and see if it  
will not turn out a perjury case, before we're done with it.  
Wait till you hear Rory swearing away his soul this day!  
You never heard his like for the great flow of language  
—English or Gaelic, it's all the same to Rory—there's no  
stopping the lying tongue of him!

COURT OFFICER. As bad as that!

MACCALLUM. Aye, as bad as that! Wait you! For if  
this place is not struck by lightning as soon as Rory opens  
his dirty mouth my name is not Duncan MacCallum.

COURT OFFICER. Och, if it's lies brings down the lightning,  
this place would have been rock and lime long ago.

MACCALLUM. Well, well! And is that the way of it?

[MR MACINTOSH, a lawyer from Oban, enters, carrying  
a black gown on his arm. He is a man of fifty.

## RORY AFORESAID

*clean-shaven, and bald-headed. He has narrow, quizzing eyes.*

COURT OFFICER. Good day, Mr MacIntosh!

MACINTOSH. Oh, good day, Mr MacConnachie! Look here, this isn't the gown I left here a week ago.

COURT OFFICER. I'm sorry, Mr MacIntosh. Some of the other lawyers must have taken yours last Tuesday. Just you be doing with that one for to-day.

MACINTOSH. It's a confounded nuisance, you know.

*[He turns to go out.]*

MACCALLUM *[coming forward]*. Good day to you, sir?

MACINTOSH. Oh, good day! I'm afraid I haven't the pleasure of knowing you.

COURT OFFICER. This is the pursuer, sir—Mr MacCallum of Ardnish.

MACCALLUM. Yes, yes. Now isn't it strange that you'll not remember me? You got some Harris tweed out of my shop at Ardnish, a year ago last August.

MACINTOSH. Ardnish? I was never in Ardnish all my life, I'm sorry to say. But a fine place, I hear.

MACCALLUM. Och, yes, but you *were* in Ardnish. Yes, yes—a year ago last August. And I mistook you for a Mr MacFarlane, a great salmon-fisher what was staying at Ardnish Hotel.

MACINTOSH. Well, I'm no salmon-fisher, Mr MacCallum. And I was never in Ardnish at any time. You're mistaken.

MACCALLUM. Am I saying you are a salmon-fisher? . . . All I'm saying is that there was an excursion steamer in from Oban on the day you took the tweed off me. There were many strangers about that day, and you were one of them. And the name you had then was not MacIntosh, but MacFarlane, and, having that name, I thought you were the great salmon-fisher from the Hotel.

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MACINTOSH. Sir, do you doubt my word? I tell again I was never in Ardnish in all my life!

MACCALLUM. Och, yes, but you were. A year ago August. And off you went with ten good yards of Harris tweed in your trap, just in time to catch the steamer, as found out afterwards. And that tweed was never paid for. And me not seeing you from that day to this.

MACINTOSH. Is this a joke, sir?

MACCALLUM. No joke about it. It was ten yards of Harris tweed, and never a penny did I get for it.

MACINTOSH. I tell you, sir, it must have been somebody else.

MACCALLUM. And I tell you I never forget a face or a voice. And what I say to you is: Pay me for the tweed you stole away from me a year ago last August.

MACINTOSH. Stole?—stole? You hear what this man says, MacConnachie? *[He takes out paper and pencil, and makes a note hurriedly.]* He accuses me of theft; and I take you as a witness.

COURT OFFICER. Och, no, no! I've enough to do with putting other people into the witness-box, let alone myself! For goodness' sake, be settling it among yourselves!

MACINTOSH. But this is too serious a matter to pass over, Mr MacConnachie. Excuse me a moment. *[He goes to door at back, and calls.]* Mr MacColl! *[ROBY enters.]* This isn't your case yet, Mr MacColl. But something almost as important. *[MACCALLUM moves away, but MACINTOSH puts a hand on his arm.]* Just a moment, sir. Will you now have the kindness to repeat before this good man the words you have just used about myself?

MACCALLUM. Good man? And who are you calling a good man? *[Then to ROBY]* Well, you may be a good man, Neil of the Mountain said to the cat, but you haven't the grace of one.

ROBY. And who are you to be talking? You're nothing;

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but a whistle and a noise, when all's said and done. Man, man! you'd make a stirk laugh.

MACINTOSH. Never mind, Mr MacColl. Just let him repeat what he said a moment ago in the presence of Mr MacConnachie here.

MACCALLUM. 'Deed, and I'll do nothing so foolish. But I'll be seeing my lawyer to-morrow, about you and my Harris tweed.

MACINTOSH. What Harris tweed?

MACCALLUM. The Harris tweed you stole from me last August!

MACINTOSH. Ah! I thought that would fetch you. You heard, Rory? He said "stole."

RORY. He did that.

MACCALLUM. Och, I'll be staying here no longer with such a pair of thieves.

RORY. Well, it's a poor pair that's no match for one, anyway.

[MACCALLUM *flounces out, shouting* :

MACCALLUM. I said thieves and I'll stick to it, look you!

MACINTOSH. You observe, Rory? He said "thieves." You heard, MacConnachie. Please take a note, both of you.

[*He scribbles industriously himself.*

COURT OFFICER. Och, I'm not taking any notes. I've my own work to attend to.

[*He goes out angrily.*

MACINTOSH [*still scribbling*]. All right! Please take a note, Rory, that Mr MacConnachie refused to take a note, will you?

RORY. Och, no need for notes, for I'll be minding all he said. And I'm no scholar with the pen, anyway.

MACINTOSH [*shutting his notebook with a snap, angrily*]. The idea! Why, I never was in Ardnish in all my life! Called me a thief, did he? Well, he'll find it's not one penny will settle this little business before I've finished with him!

RORY. Yes, yes! But about my own case, now? You

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

were saying you won't be giving me the good advice before the Court starts.

MACINTOSH. It's awkward doing that here. Somebody might come in. And we've lost time, too, with that fool and his Harris tweed. *[He makes for the door, but turns.]* No, we can't go into the witness room now. 'Tell you what! Put your foot against that door. *[RORY does so.]* Thank you. And now I'll give you a few hints. *[He paces up and down, capitating.]* The old ruffian! Called me a thief! Well, we'll see. Tuts! Him and his Harris tweed!

RORY. I wish you'd leave that Harris tweed alone, and tell me what to say about the sheep I killed.

MACINTOSH. Aha! So you did kill it? Last Tuesday you told me that you didn't kill it!

RORY. Yes, yes; I told you that.

MACINTOSH. Well, will you go into that box to-day and swear on oath that you did not kill it?

RORY. Look you! Some of them poor sheep are that bad with the braxy that they're far better killed.

MACINTOSH. I know all that. But will you take your oath that you did not kill MacCallum's sheep?

RORY. Och, take an oath, is it?

MACINTOSH. Yes.

RORY. No, no! I have my religion; and I'll take no oath.

MACINTOSH. You say you did not kill this sheep?

RORY. No *[hesitatingly]*.

MACINTOSH. Then why not swear as before Almighty God that you didn't?

RORY. Och, no! I have my religion, you'll understand. I'm not liking that oath at all, at all.

MACINTOSH. Well, what are you going to tell the Sheriff?

RORY. I'll tell him MacCallum didn't see me kill the sheep.

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MACINTOSH. But MacCallum will swear that he did see you.

RORY. Och, no, it was too dark that night. He couldn't see me.

MACINTOSH. Man alive! You'll lose your case, if you say that! Look here, Rory! Unless you promise to take the oath, and say you didn't kill that sheep, I'll fling up your case.

RORY. Now, now, Mr MacIntosh, be you a good man! Don't you be angry with poor Rory. See you this! [*He turns out a dirty purse*] Look at the good pound-notes I have for paying you—that is, if I'll win the case.

MACINTOSH. My good fellow, you must pay me, I'm afraid, whether you win or lose.

RORY. Och, is it pay you, if I lose? No, no!

MACINTOSH. Look here, you old humbug! I've had enough of this. You must promise me here and now to settle up as soon as the case is finished. Otherwise I'm off home with the one o'clock steamer.

RORY. Och, very well! The man that divides the pudding will have the thick end to himself, I can see! But I'll promise, if there are to be no oaths.

MACINTOSH. You are a stubborn old mule. Why! the Sheriff won't hear you, unless you take the oath.

RORY. I could be having a sore throat, look you, and no can speak.

MACINTOSH. Good! But no—that won't do. He'd ask you to nod your head very lively as he repeated the oath to you. Tell you what, though! Say something silly every time he addresses you, or when anyone speaks to you at all. Understand?

RORY [*parrot-fashion*]. "Something silly."

MACINTOSH. No, no! Say something different each time.

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RORY [*parrot-fashion*]. "Something different each time  
Will that do?"

MACINTOSH. You *are* an ass! An ass? Aha! I've got  
it. You're not an ass, Rory, you're a sheep!

RORY. Is it me—a sheep?

MACINTOSH. Yes, a sheep. And every time you're spoken  
to by way of question you must answer like a sheep. Like  
this—*Baa!* Understand?

RORY. *Baa!*

MACINTOSH. Splendid. The Sheriff will think you're off  
your head, and ask you to stand down. Besides, since  
MacCallum has no lawyer with him he's sure to mix his case  
all up. We're in luck, old son, we're in luck! Ha-ha!

RORY. Aye, laugh away! But it may be no laughing for  
me, if the Sheriff gets cross. Man, man, if I had a boil, and  
you squeezing it, you'd still be laughing.

MACINTOSH. Sorry, Rory! No offence! But, tell me,  
who is MacCallum's agent? It's quite true, isn't it, that  
he was carried past the pier in the ten o'clock steamer?

RORY. Yes, it's true enough. It was Mr Thomson from  
the Oban.

MACINTOSH. Well, he can't get back to-day, anyway.  
Good thing I took the eight o'clock boat, or where would  
you have been, eh?

RORY. *Baa!*

MACINTOSH. Splendid! You'll look as daff as Lachie  
forra! And MacCallum will be no better when I've  
finished cross-examining him, let me tell you. Besides, the  
Sheriff will be in a hurry. He always expects a round of golf  
before lunch on a Tuesday, if I know his little ways. You  
catch him scuttling off, as soon's we're through. Fine!  
[*He rubs his hands. Sound of voices outside door at*  
*5.*] Hush! They're coming! Quick! Take your foot  
from that door now.

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*[They both come forward into the body of the Court-house.]*

COURT OFFICER *[entering with MACCALLUM]*. Will you please sit here, Mr MacCallum? *[He indicates table.]*

MACCALLUM. Thank you, Mr MacConnachie.

*[He sits down at table, and, drawing out his notes, consults them carefully. MACINTOSH takes a seat at opposite end of table, and refers to his papers also.]*

COURT OFFICER *[to RORY]*. You'll sit here, Rory. *[He indicates the front bench, facing the SHERIFF'S desk.]*

RORY. Baa!

COURT OFFICER. What did you say?

RORY. Baa!

*[MACCALLUM looks up in astonishment. Some of the crofters and townsfolk who have entered tithe, as they take their seats in the back benches. COURT OFFICER goes out, and whispers in the SHERIFF, be-wigged and gowned.]*

COURT OFFICER. Court!

*[All stand, and after the SHERIFF has taken his seat sit again. The COURT OFFICER whispers to the SHERIFF, pointing to MACCALLUM. The SHERIFF puts his hand to his ear, and says: "Eh?" The COURT OFFICER whispers more loudly. It is evident that his lordship is slightly deaf; and from the way he peers at his papers it is also clear that he doesn't see very well. Throughout the ensuing scene his deafness and defective vision are clearly indicated by his various gestures. At times he does not make out who is addressing whom.]*

SHERIFF. Ah, most unfortunate! I'm sorry, Mr MacCallum, to hear that your solicitor has been carried past the pier, because of the storm this morning. That is so, isn't it?

MACCALLUM. Yes, my lord.



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SHERIFF. Then I suppose you will put forward your own case?

MACCALLUM. If you please, my lord.

SHERIFF. Very well. Go on.

[MACCALLUM nods to COURT OFFICER, who goes out by door at back.

COURT OFFICER [in a loud voice]. Mrs MacLean!

[MRS MACLEAN, a stout Highland crofter-woman, with a shock of red hair, appears. She is flustered, and has an aggressive air, as she is ushered into the witness-box.

SHERIFF. You are Mrs MacLean, Ardnish?

MRS MACLEAN. Yes, my lord.

SHERIFF [holding up right hand]. "I swear by Almighty God."

MRS MACLEAN [holding up right-hand]. "I swear by Almighty God."

SHERIFF. "As I shall answer to God."

MRS MACLEAN. "As I shall answer to God."

SHERIFF. "At the great day of judgment."

MRS MACLEAN. "At the great day of judgment."

SHERIFF. "That I will tell the truth."

MRS MACLEAN. "That I will tell the truth."

SHERIFF. "The whole truth."

MRS MACLEAN. "The whole truth."

SHERIFF. "And nothing but the truth."

MRS MACLEAN. "And nothing but the truth."

MACCALLUM [rising and turning over his papers excitedly.] Mrs MacLean, was you very fond of sheep's-head broth?

MRS MACLEAN. I was that.

SHERIFF. Louder, please. I can't hear.

MRS MACLEAN. I—was—that.

SHERIFF. Thank you.

## RORY AFORESAID

MACCALLUM. Was it known to the deceased, the aforesaid Rory MacCall, that you was very fond of sheep's-head broth?

MRS MACLEAN. It was that.

MACCALLUM. Did he ask yourself and Widow MacIver to a meal of sheep's-head broth on the day of the 28th March last?

MRS MACLEAN. Was that a Thursday?

MACCALLUM. It was that.

SHERIFF. A little louder, please. What did you say, Mr MacCallum?

MACCALLUM. I said, "It was that," O lord—I mean my lord.

SHERIFF. Thank you! Go on, Mrs MacLean. Tell us if that Thursday was the 28th of March.

MRS MACLEAN. Och, I'll no' say mind. But it was the day after Rory killed the sheep.

SHERIFF. Stop!—stop!—stop! You really must not say a thing like that. It has not yet been proved that anybody killed a sheep. Answer the question—no more. You mean that it was on the day after Mr MacCallum's sheep was said to be killed?

MRS MACLEAN. Said to be killed? It was killed. How else could we have the sheep's-head broth?

SHERIFF. But you must not say that. Just answer my question.

MRS MACLEAN. And where could Rory have got a sheep's head but from a sheep?

SHERIFF. Ahem! I am afraid, Mr MacCallum, I am trespassing on your field, but with your permission, I'll interrogate this witness myself. *[MACCALLUM bows and sits down, saying:]*

MACCALLUM. Certainly, O lord.

SHERIFF. Now, Mrs MacLean! You had a meal of sheep's-

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

head broth with Rory MacColl on Thursday, the 28th day of March last? Is that so?

MRS MACLEAN. It was a Thursday, anyway.

SHERIFF. But is there nothing you can remember which happened about that time that will help you to the exact date?

MRS MACLEAN. Well, I saw Rory having the sheep's head singed at the smiddy on the morning of the day we had the sheep's-head broth.

SHERIFF. Well, what morning was that?

MRS MACLEAN. The morning after the night that Rory killed the sheep.

SHERIFF *[more in sorrow than in anger]*. That will do, Mrs MacLean. Any questions, Mr MacIntosh?

MACINTOSH. No, my lord.

SHERIFF. Stand down, Mrs MacLean.

*[The COURT OFFICER leads the bewildered MRS MACLEAN out of the room. MACCALLUM leaves the table and enters the witness-box. He takes the oath in the same form as the former witness.]*

SHERIFF. Well, tell us your story, Mr MacCallum.

MACCALLUM. My lord, having lost of late half a score of sheep, without having had from the aforesaid Rory MacColl a satisfactory account of their decease—

SHERIFF. Did you say "decease"?

MACCALLUM. Any way you like it, my lord. They were dead, anyway, my lord—or as good as dead, for I never saw them after the first dipping.

SHERIFF. Yes, yes. Go on, please. Time is short, Mr MacCallum. Never mind about the dipping.

MACCALLUM. I decided therefore to watch said offender, having suspected the deceased Rory—the aforesaid Rory—of having caused decease of sheep aforesaid *[MACINTOSH laughs audibly behind his hand, banging*

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*head.* MACCALLUM *hears him, and says angrily :*] Aye, laugh away, MacIntosh ! But I'm not forgetting that Harris tweed !

SHERIFF [*not perceiving the cause of the interruption*]. What's this about tweed ? We don't want anything irrelevant. Please let us keep to our sheep, and leave dippings and tweed alone.

MACCALLUM. Yes, my lord. And a fine sheep it was—as fine a gimmer as ever you saw. I watched Rory through a hole in the wall of the fank on the night of the 27th March last, and saw him kill the sheep—the said 27th of March being the night before the beforesaid sheep's-head broth was made by Rory aforesaid. [MACINTOSH *laughs again involuntarily.*] Aye, laugh away, Mr MacIntosh, but I'll be even with you yet !

SHERIFF. What's that ? Whatever are you talking about, sir !

MACCALLUM. I'm talking about the good Harris tweed that was stole from me, and never paid for, O lord !

SHERIFF. I really can't follow you, Mr MacCallum. Let us come back to our sheep, if you please.

MACCALLUM. Very good, my lord. I saw Rory aforesaid cut off the head of my good gummer before my very eyes, mending said head, no doubt, for the sheep's-head broth to be made on the 28th March aforesaid. [MACINTOSH *laughs again.*] Yes, you may laugh ! But all the same I'll make you pay for the ten yards of tweed you took away in your trap.

SHERIFF. Ten yards in a trap ? Whatever are you saying now, Mr MacCallum ? Who ever heard of ten yards of a sheep ?

MACCALLUM. No, my lord. Ten yards of good Harris tweed. Crotal colour it was. And it never paid for, since a year ago last August.

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SHERIFF. I really don't follow you. Do, please, let us get back to our sheep. I really wish you had a legal representative here, Mr MacCallum. Continue.

MACCALLUM. I saw him kill the sheep by cutting its throat first of all, my lord. And then, thinking maybe of the aforesaid sheep's-head broth, he cut off the sheep's head to make the broth aforesaid. [MACINTOSH *cackles once more.*] Look at him laughing. But you did not laugh when you got into your trap and drove off with the Harris tweed you never paid for!

SHERIFF. Do I understand you to say that the defender caught the sheep in a trap? Was it a variety of sheep known as a Harris sheep? I thought that breed was extinct. . . . Is there still a variety called a Harris sheep? We used to call them St Kilda sheep in my young days. They had three horns or four, had they not?

MACCALLUM. My lord, it wasn't the sheep that was in the trap. It was the tweed—good Harris tweed, and croral at that.

SHERIFF. Ah! You mean that the wool lost by the disappearance of the sheep was equivalent to so much good Harris tweed? Is that it? If that is so, never mind about the tweed just now. We are not concerned with the possible products of the sheep. Let us come back to the sheep itself. We are really not concerned with the tweed.

MACCALLUM. Well, if your lordship will allow me to say I'm really more concerned about the tweed than the sheep.

SHERIFF. Yes, yes, I know. But the sheep comes first then the wool, then the spinning and the dyeing, then the weaving of the tweed. I know all that. But the sheep comes before the tweed, doesn't it?

MACCALLUM. Well, in this case it didn't, my lord. The tweed was stolen long before the sheep was killed. It was a year ago last August.

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ENTERER. Ahem! I am afraid I must ask you to discontinue, Mr MacCallum. Time is short; and I can't follow you into all these irrelevancies. . . . Now, Mr MacIntosh

MACINTOSH. Mr MacCallum, you say you saw the defender kill the sheep on the night of the 27th March last?

MACCALLUM. I did that.

MACINTOSH. At what o'clock did you see this?

MACCALLUM. About nine o'clock.

MACINTOSH. Was there a moon that night?

MACCALLUM. No.

MACINTOSH. Had defender a light in the dark?

MACCALLUM. No.

MACINTOSH. What kind of knife had he?

MACCALLUM. I did not see the knife.

MACINTOSH. You did not see the knife? Why?

MACCALLUM. It was too dark.

MACINTOSH. So that you could not see the knife, and yet you saw him kill the sheep?

MACCALLUM. I hear I hear someone at the sheep, and saying he'd soon kill it. And then I heard the poor beast struggling and groaning, and then it stopped all at once.

MACINTOSH. Ah! So you did not really see him kill the sheep? You heard him kill the sheep?

MACCALLUM. Yes. I heard him kill the sheep.

MACINTOSH. You heard some words, and you thought those words came from a sheep in groaning being killed?

MACCALLUM. I heard him kill the sheep.

MACINTOSH. I understand! You claim then that you did not see him kill the sheep?

MACCALLUM. I heard him kill the sheep.

MACINTOSH. Very well. Now, Mr MacCallum, after that, will you please tell him what it is about the case that a sheep struggles and groans if some one goes to and see it?

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MACCALLUM. It might well do that.

MACINTOSH. So that the struggling and groaning you heard might not have been the sounds of a sheep in process of being killed.

MACCALLUM. I heard him kill the sheep.

MACINTOSH. Very well. Now, will you please explain to his lordship what you mean when you say that you saw the defendant with a sheep of the species called Harris, and measuring ten yards; the said sheep being caught in a trap?

MACCALLUM. Never you mind what I mean, Mr MacIntosh, or Mr MacFarlane or whatever your name is! . . . But I say you stole a roll of Harris tweed from me in Ardnish, a year ago last August; and it's never paid for yet!

MACINTOSH *[sitting down]*. Thank you.

SHERIFF. That will do, Mr MacCallum. Stand down.

*[MACCALLUM, fuming, is led back to his seat at the table by the COURT OFFICER. RORY is then taken to witness-box, at a sign from MACINTOSH.]*

COURT OFFICER. You're next, Rory.

MACINTOSH. His name is Rory MacColl, my lord—the defender, aged sixty-two. He hasn't much English.

SHERIFF *[writing]*. Very good. *[Then, holding up his right hand]* "I swear by Almighty God." *[RORY is silent.]* Repeat after me. "I swear"—he has some English, hasn't he, Mr MacIntosh?

MACINTOSH. Oh, yes, my lord.

SHERIFF. Can you hear me?

RORY. *Baa!*

SHERIFF. What do you say?

RORY. *Baa!*

SHERIFF. I beg pardon. Again.

RORY. *Baa!*

SHERIFF. Is this man *compas mentis*, Mr MacIntosh?

MACINTOSH. He has certainly been very queer of late, my

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lord. Indeed, ever since this dreadful charge has been levelled against him he has been odd in his manner. He has always been of a gentle, trustful nature. And now that he finds the harsh realities of the world quite other than he had dreamt them to be, it may quite well have fallen out that his mind has become unbalanced.

answer. My dear Sir, if there are many more witnesses in this case like that man and his two predecessors my own mind will certainly become enlarged. See what you can make of him, and then I'll give up the case.

Mr. McColl. Did you ever at any time or under any circumstances sell a sheep belonging to Mr. McCadorn?

WILLIAM J. DAVIS

**MACINTOSH** Answer me properly, please. Where did you get the sheep's head, of which you made a torch?

1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 2680, 26

**WARNING** Can't read or figure it out? I can't help you.

**POST-TEST**

Washington (Harris, who is touring widely, with his band at times) I am sure that you would. The president's head has been turned by the appeal.

[illegible]



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

by a sheep in its death-agony. I am not an authority on the sounds emitted by sheep, although after listening to Mr MacColl's performance in the witness-box I feel as if, with a little further study, I might qualify as such. But one does not require to be an authority to see that Mr MacCallum may have misinterpreted the sounds he heard. I express my regret that Mr MacCallum's solicitor was not here to help him with his case. Judgment for the defender, with expenses.

*[He rises to go, and all stand, as he goes out by left back. The public file out, laughing, as they discuss the case. MACCALLUM slides over to MACINTOSH.]*

MACCALLUM. You'll hear more about that Harris tweed before long, Mr MacIntosh.

MACINTOSH. And so will you, my friend! You won't call me a thief in a hurry again. I have two witnesses.

MACCALLUM. No, no! You had two witnesses. But now you're only one, for the other's nothing but a big sheep that can only say "Baa!"

*[He stamps out angrily, and the COURT OFFICIAL follows him, leaving ROY and MACINTOSH together alone. MACINTOSH takes off his gown, and stuffs his papers into his attaché case.]*

MACINTOSH. Splendid, Roy! Now that they're all gone we may congratulate, I think. *[He shakes hands with ROY.]* Well, what about settling up now? No doubt as to whether you won or not, eh?

ROY. Baa!

MACINTOSH. That's right! Keep it up for a day or two! I'll just write you out a receipt. My fee is five guineas. *[He gets pen and paper, and writes.]* There, the usual. I want to catch the steamer. We'll say five pounds.

*[He stamps the receipt, and hands it to ROY.]*

## ROBY AFORLSAID

*ROBY (pocketing it and making for the door). Baa!*

MACINTOSH. You're priceless, old son. But hurry up, for I must get that boat.

*ROBY (springing out and sticking in his head through doorway, regards him with a blank face). Baa!* *(He descends)*

MACINTOSH. My five pounds! Give me back that receipt!

*(But the only reply is a distant "Baa!")* MACINTOSH  
*rushes to the doorway and looks after him.*

CURTAIN



# THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

By STANLEY HOUGHTON

## CHARACTERS

MR OGDEN

FRED OGDEN, his son

MRS OGDEN, his second wife

JOHN, Mrs OGDEN's sister

DR JEFFERSON

MR STANFORD, a neighbour

*The scene is the parlour in the house of Mr OGDEN.*

This play was produced at the Lyceum Theatre, Manchester, on September 27th, 1901, with the following cast:

Mr OGDEN	HERBERT LEWIS
Fred OGDEN	CHARLES FROST
Mrs OGDEN	MARY FRANK
JOHN	LESLIE FRANK
Dr JEFFERSON	LEWIS LEWIS
Mr STANFORD	LEWIS DUNN

A short account of the late Stanley Houghton appears in the Second Series of *One-Act Plays of To-day*, in which volume his Lancashire comedy "The Dear Departed" is printed. The following play is, in a sense, complementary to "The Dear Departed," for in the latter the hero, Abel Merryweather, is assumed to be dead, whereas in the present play the hero is assumed to be alive. In both cases the dramatic situation hinges upon a mistake. The one naturally proves to be a comedy, and the other ends on a note which is distinctly grim.

Stanley Houghton won fame with his "Hindle Wakes," but he was a master of the technique of the one-act play.

## THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE<sup>1</sup>

*The scene is triangular; only two walls of MR OVENS' parlour being visible. The left-hand wall is the longer. A window with a dark blind is near the spectator and farther away is the fireplace. In the right-hand wall is the door, leading into a hall or passage. By the hearth, with its back to the spectator, is an armchair; it would be full in the light from the window if the blind were up and the sun were shining into the room. In the middle of the room is a big round table and three chairs. A sideboard is below the door; and a bureau, a sofa, and other chairs are in the room.*

*The place is comfortable; the room of a hard-headed peasant come to town and fairly successful there; of a man who without any advantages of birth or assistance of friends has carved out his two or three hundred a year competence for his old age; by severe economy and lucky speculations in small things.*

*It is an autumn evening. The fire is low, and the incandescent gas-burner by the hearth is lighted.*

*MR OVENS is sitting in the armchair with his back to the spectator. His face is not visible, but one can see his whitish-grey hair and his bent back. EDIE and MRS*

<sup>1</sup> Applications regarding amateur performances of this play should be addressed to Messrs Samuel French, Ltd., 25 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, or 25 West 45th Street, New York.

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

OVENS are sitting on opposite sides of the table, finishing a supper of bread and cheese and coffee. MRS OVENS is a hard, vigorous, capable woman of thirty-five; EDIE a rather pleasant girl of twenty-three.

EDIE. Won't he have any supper? [Nodding at MR OVENS.]

MRS OVENS. He? [Jerking her head towards MR OVENS] No; he had his bread and milk at six o'clock. I shan't give him any more before he goes to bed.

EDIE [glancing at clock]. It's half-past eight now.

MRS OVENS. He doesn't eat much. Slops and things of that sort. I have to feed him like a baby; he makes such a mess of his clothes if I don't. [Looking into the coffee jug] Will you have a drop more coffee? There's only enough for one.

EDIE. No, I don't care about it.

MRS OVENS. Then I'll finish it. [She pours out the coffee.] I'd have fancied an onion with my cheese to-night, but Mr Skrimshire's coming in to see him [Jerking her head backwards at MR OVENS], and they make your breath smell so.

EDIE. Mr Skrimshire; he's the solicitor that lives up at Back Top?

MRS OVENS. Yes. He [Jerk of head] used to take all his bits of business to Skrimshire's office in Salchester; and since he's so ill now and can't get up to town, young Mr Skrimshire said he'd look in and see him to-night.

EDIE. What does he want to see Mr Skrimshire for?

MRS OVENS [smiling mysteriously]. Ah, ah.

EDIE. Can he hear us?

MRS OVENS. Hear us? No fear. He's so deaf that he'd sit there as quiet as a mouse if the world was coming to an end and the last trumpet sounding.

EDIE [coaxing]. Then tell me.

## THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

MRS OVENS [*with a backward jerk*]. He's going to alter his will, at last.

EDIE. My word ! Going to cut Fred out ?

MRS OVENS [*compressing her lips*]. That I can't say.

EDIE. Is he going to leave everything to you ?

MRS OVENS. Not that either. But if he did wouldn't I have deserved it ?

EDIE. He's been a lot of trouble to you these five years.

MRS OVENS. Trouble ! You may well say that. Let alone my marrying him when I was only thirty, and I might easily have found some young fellow who'd have been glad to ask me.

EDIE. I said at the time you were daft ; and he a widower with a son older than yourself

MRS OVENS. He was sixty-six when I married him ; he's seventy-one now. He'll not last much longer, and I'm only thirty-five.

EDIE. I never thought to see him pull through that last attack. It's to be hoped he doesn't linger.

MRS OVENS. No, it would be a mercy if he were taken quickly. A mercy for him, I mean.

EDIE. And for you, too, if it comes to that.

MRS OVENS. You'd never believe the work I have with him. Dressing him, and undressing him, and getting him up and down the stairs. He won't stop in his bedroom out of the way ; must be down here in his armchair. I could shake him sometimes, he's that stupid.

[*There's a knock at the front door.*]

MRS OVENS. Go and see who it is, Edie. It's too early for Mr Skrimshire yet, surely. Perhaps it's the doctor ; he's not been to-day.

[*EDIE goes out. MRS OVENS rises and goes to hearth.*  
[*To MR OVENS, loudly*] Are you quite warm enough ? [*MRS OVENS does not reply.*] You'll have to wake up when Mr



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

Skrimshire comes. [*Grumbling to herself*] I don't know why you can't stop in bed; you do nothing but sleep down here.

[*ROSE runs in rather scared.*]

EDIE. Annie, it's Fred!

MRS OVENS. Fred?

EDIE. Fred Owens. His son!

MRS OVENS. What does he want?

[*FRED OVENS follows EDIE into the room. He is a tall, well-built, heavy man of thirty-six. He is awkward and sullen, almost brutish; but also rather a striking, handsome man in a clumsy way. He has a moustache; and wears rough country clothes, very shabby, but almost picturesque. A coloured muffler is round his neck, and he carries a cap.*]

FRED. That's a fine way to welcome a fellow when he comes home.

MRS OVENS. This isn't your home.

FRED. I want to have a word with you, Annie. You'll excuse me calling you Annie; I never could bring myself to call you "Mother."

MRS OVENS. You can call me what you please so long as you take yourself away from here.

FRED [*using MR OVENS*]. Ay; there he is.

MRS OVENS. He doesn't want to see you.

FRED. I reckon I don't want to see him, either. Last time I came he banged the front door in my face.

MRS OVENS. Small wonder, either, seeing you came straight from gaol, without even waiting for your hair to grow. He told you never to let him see you again.

FRED. You're as fond of me as ever, Annie.

MRS OVENS. Now look here, Fred Owens. I'm boss here. If you don't get out of this house in two minutes I'll send Edie for the police.

FRED. Damn it; you'll give me something to eat.

## THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

MRS OVENS. I will not.

FRED. I'm starving. I've not eaten a bit since yesterday.

MRS OVENS. That's no affair of mine.

EDIE. Give him something to eat, Annie.

MRS OVENS. No.

EDIE. He's hungry. He'll go away quiet after. [MRS OVENS *hesitates*.] There's some bread and cheese here. Do, now.

MRS OVENS [*relenting*]. You can have a bite of bread and cheese.

FRED [*sarcastically polite*]. Thank you, Annie.

EDIE. Can I get him some beer?

MRS OVENS [*grudgingly*]. If you like.

FRED. That's good of you, Edie. I always knew my old father chose the wrong one when he married Annie.

[*Edie goes out for the beer. Fred sits in the chair on the right of the table.*]

MRS OVENS [*sitting on the left of the table*]. Mind, you get outside this house as soon as you've finished.

FRED [*eating*]. You talk to me so like my father that I think I'll have to call you "Mother" in future.

MRS OVENS. Don't let me have any of your lip. And just keep quiet or you'll wake your father, and then there'll be a fine row. He'd never forgive me for letting you come in here. [*Edie returns with a jug of beer and a glass.*]

FRED. Thank you, my dear. [*He pours out beer.*] Good health, Father. [*He drinks.*] I hear he's not been so well lately.

MRS OVENS. He's never been the same since you came and told him you'd been in gaol, and he turned you out. He had a stroke that night.

FRED. Ah!

MRS OVENS. We thought his mind was clean broken down for a time. He couldn't speak properly, or attend

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

EDIE FRANKLIN. Indeed, he's only just getting right again now.

FRED. It's lucky he's got such a good, kind wife to look after him.

MRS OVEN. Be sharp with that, now, and clear out.

[She rises.

FRED. Before I clear out there's something else I want you to do for me.

MRS OVEN. What's that? [FRED smiles.] You'll get nothing else, I promise you.

FRED. You'll give me some money, won't you?

MRS OVEN. Not a penny.

FRED. Come—Mother.

MRS OVEN. Not a penny, I say. We've no money to give away here.

FRED. Lend me some, then.

MRS OVEN. Lend you?

FRED. I'll pay you back.

MRS OVEN. You'll never be able to pay anything back.

FRED. Some time. When he's gone. [Nodding at MRS OVEN.]

MRS OVEN [grimly smiling]. I don't think so.

[FRED looks at her in silence, and pushes his plate away.

FRED. What? Has he cut me off, then?

MRS OVEN. What do you deserve?

FRED. Isn't he going to leave me anything?

MRS OVEN. I don't know what he's done.

FRED [angrily]. Has he altered his will? [He rises.

MRS OVEN [alarmed]. Sit down. No, he's not altered his will.

FRED [relieved, and sitting down again]. Ah! Then there will be something. He divided it all between you and me; the money and the houses.

## THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

MRS OVENS. I believe he did.

FRED. Now look here. [*He leans back in his chair and pulls out his empty trousers pockets.*] That's all I've got in the world. If you'll lend me ten quid I'll not trouble you again for a long time.

MRS OVENS. Why don't you *earn* your living?

FRED. I've tried.

MRS OVENS. Tried indeed? You don't want to work.

FRED. It's not so easy to get work as you may think.

MRS OVENS. Where have you been trying?

FRED. In Salchester.

MRS OVENS. You've been at those meetings of the unemployed?

FRED. Yes, I've done a deal of talking at them.

MRS OVENS. I thought so; that's about all you're fit for. Have you done now?

FRED [*leaning back in his chair*]. Ay, I've done.

MRS OVENS. Then you'd better be going.

FRED. You're mighty free with your tongue, Mother. Suppose I said I wouldn't go?

MRS OVENS. I'd have you turned out. I'm master in this house.

FRED [*nodding to MR OVENS*]. What about him? I thought he was master.

MRS OVENS. You thought wrong then. But you can wake him up if you like and see what he'll say.

FRED. No, I know what he'll say. [*Rising and walking round to MR OVENS*] Yes; you've been a good father to me.

MRS OVENS. You've been a good son to him, haven't you?

FRED [*not heeding her*]. You turned me out of doors when I needed helping; you hate me. Well, I don't love you, neither.

MRS OVENS. Are you going?

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

FRED. I'm going. [*He moves towards the door.*] Give me some money.

MRS OVENS. Not a farthing.

[*There is a knock at the front door. EDIE goes out.*]  
MRS OVENS. Drat it, there's Mr Skrimshire, and me not ready for him. That's your fault.

FRED. Well, I'm going, aren't I? Who's this coming?

MRS OVENS. Some one to see your father on business. [*EDIE reappears.*]

EDIE. Mr Skrimshire's come, Annie.

C. [*MR SKRIMSHIRE, a very smartly dressed young fellow of about twenty-seven, comes in briskly. He is the son and junior partner of old SKRIMSHIRE MR OVENS' solicitor.*]

MR SKRIMSHIRE. Good evening, Mrs Owens.

MRS OVENS. Good evening, Mr Skrimshire.

MR SKRIMSHIRE. My father's getting on, you know, and he doesn't like turning out again after he gets home from town; and since Mr Owens is too ill to come to the office, my father thought he wouldn't mind giving me his instructions.

MRS OVENS. Oh, certainly, Mr Skrimshire. I'll make room for you here. [*She moves the things from a corner of the table and puts a chair for MR SKRIMSHIRE facing the spectator.*]

MR SKRIMSHIRE [*looking at MR OVENS*]. The old gentleman's having a doze, I see. Pity to waken him up. [*sits.*] Thank you.

MRS OVENS. It'll do him good. He's dozing all day long.

FRED, who is near the door] What are you waiting for?

SKRIMSHIRE [*turning round*]. Hello; you're Fred Owens, are you?

Yes, sir.

## THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

MR KERIMSHIRE. I've not seen you about the village for a good while. Have you been away?

FRED. Yes.

MR KERIMSHIRE. What are you doing now?

FRED. I'm not doing anything just now, sir.

MR KERIMSHIRE. Ah, out of work, eh? I'm sorry.

FRED. Have you come here to cut me out of his will?

MR KERIMSHIRE. Have I come here *(Nothing at MR OVENS. Grey deer man, etc.)* what are you talking about?

FRED. You've come to alter his will.

MR KERIMSHIRE *(struggling in shoulders and raising his eyebrows at MR OVENS)*. Mrs Owens, er—your husband wants to see me alone, doesn't he?

FRED *(to MR OVENS)*. Tell me if he's come to alter my father's will.

MR OVENS. Yes, he has.

MR KERIMSHIRE *(pretending)*. Really?

FRED. Is he going to cut me out? *(To MR KERIMSHIRE)* Are you going to cut me out?

MR KERIMSHIRE. Don't make a fool of yourself, Owens. Since Mrs Owens has told you, I don't mind saying that I've come here to take your father's instructions for a fresh will. He may be going to cut you out, as you call it, for all I know. On the other hand, he may be going to leave you everything, or again, he may be going to leave everything to the Archbishop of Canterbury. I haven't the least idea what he's going to do, and if I had I shouldn't tell you.

FRED *(going up to MR OVENS)*. You old devil; you're going to cut me out, are you? *(He shakes his fist at him)* Come you!

MR OVENS *(warning FRED)*. You leave him alone.

MR KERIMSHIRE *(smiling)*. Mrs Owens, unless I can see your

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

*And what about it is really no use my waiting my time here.*

*[He replaces some papers in his pocket.*

*[There is a knock at the front door. EDIE runs out, returning to MR SKRIMSHIRE.]* All right, Mr Skrimshire, you don't need to disturb yourself. I'm going.

MR SKRIMSHIRE. That's right, Ovens. I'm glad you're not going to be stupid. Look here, come and see me at the office some day next week, and I'll see if I can find you a job.

EDIE. That's good of you. Why do you make an offer like that to me?

MR SKRIMSHIRE. You may be a client of ours some day.

*[EDIE then is DR JELlicoe, a jolly, stout medical man of about forty.]*

DR JELlicoe. Good evening, Mrs Ovens. *[He looks at EDIE, but doesn't know him. He speaks to MR SKRIMSHIRE.]* Hello, Jimmy, what are you doing here? *[Without waiting for an answer.]* I'm disgracefully late, aren't I? I was called away to Wrayford to young Mrs Amore. An urgent case, but it turned out all right, I'm happy to say. A fine boy. That's why I'm so late. Can't be helped. These things happen in the best-regulated families, don't they?

MRS OVENS. Well, doctor, where should we be if they didn't?

DR JELlicoe. Quite so, quite so. And how's the patient?

MRS OVENS. Not been so well to-day, doctor.

DR JELlicoe. Asleep, I see. I'll just have a look at him. Won't keep you a minute, Skrimshire.

MR SKRIMSHIRE. Don't hurry on my account, old chap.

*[DR JELlicoe walks round in front of the table and approaches MR OVENS from the back.]*

DR JELlicoe *[very loudly]*. Good evening, Mr Ovens.

## THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

*(He taps his shoulder gently.)* Wake up, sir, and let me have a look at you.

*(DR JELlicoe takes another step and turns, facing the spectator, to look MR OVENI in the face. Hardly has he glanced at MR OVENI than his own face changes in an instant, and assumes an expression of horror and surprise. He starts back.)*

DR JELlicoe *(in a very different tone)* How long has he been like this? *(They are all startled by the doctor's tone)*  
MR OVENI Like—like what, doctor?

*(Without replying, DR JELlicoe takes MR OVENI's wrist, feels the pulse, and lets the hand drop again on the knee. He places his hand on the heart. Then he straightens up and looks at the others.)*

MR OVENI Doctor, what is it?

DR JELlicoe *(quickly)* Mr OVENI is dead.

*(They all stare at the doctor, spellbound.)*

FRED *(in a low, deep voice)* Dead?

MR ARMINIUS *(in a whisper)* Good gracious!

*(A slight pause. MR OVENI gives a low wail, and sinking into the chair left of the table breaks into a painful storm of sob. She quickly subdues into a gentler subdued weeping, with her head buried in her arms. This comforts her. FRED sits down on a chair near the door, stunned. MR ARMINIUS sits greatly excited and looks at MR OVENI, and stands by the doctor.)*

MR ARMINIUS This is really an awful business, Jellie. DR JELlicoe. He must have been dead two or three hours.

MR ARMINIUS Really? What an extraordinary thing. Will there have to be an inquest?

DR JELlicoe No, I've been attending him. I expected something of the sort would happen.



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

MR SKRIMSHIRE. It's a bit of a shock, all the same. It's made me feel quite queer.

DR JELlicoe. I suppose you've nothing more to do here, now?

MR SKRIMSHIRE. No; at least, I'd better have a word with young Owens, and see if there's anything I can do.

DR JELlicoe. I've one more call to make. [*Looking at his watch*] Come round and have a bit of supper and a game of billiards when you've finished here.

MR SKRIMSHIRE. I will. Thanks very much.

(*r*) [MR SKRIMSHIRE *returns to the table and studies some papers.*]

DR JELlicoe [*touching Mrs Owens on the shoulder*]. Come, come, you mustn't give way like this. We've been expecting it, you know, we've been expecting it.

Mrs Owens [*tearfully*]. Yes.

DR JELlicoe. I should get him on to a couch, or a bed, or something like that, so that all the necessary arrangements can be made. Er—you know whom to send for?

Mrs Owens [*shaking her head*]. No.

DR JELlicoe. I'll leave an address. A very decent woman.

[*He writes an address on the back of an envelope and puts it on the table.*]

Mrs Owens [*looking round at the figure of Mr Owens*]. Edie get something—something to put over him.

DR JELlicoe. Well now, there you are. I'll call round again in the morning and see you. First thing. Good-bye my dear Mrs Owens; good-bye. I'm very sorry. [*As he passes Mr Skrimshire*] Don't be long.

[*Dr Jellicoe goes on*]

MR SKRIMSHIRE [*gently to Fred*]. Er—Mr Owens.

## THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

TRUD [rising]. Sir! *[Coming to the table and sitting in the right chair]* This makes a difference, sir!

MR. TRIMMER. The old will is valid, of course, the will he intended to supersede.

[MR. OVEN rises up and listens to the conversation. You are both acquainted with its provisions, I understand?

TRUD. I know he divided everything between her and me.

MR. TRIMMER. That was it, roughly. And nothing fairer could have been arranged, in my opinion.

[TRUD comes in with a white sheet. She gently places this over the body of MR. OVEN, so that it entirely drapes the seated figure like a shroud. They watch her in silence and then MR. TRIMMER continues, he refers to a paper.

He left this house and the money next due to you, Mr. OVEN, the two houses in Hawthorn Lane to you, ma'am. The money invested is divided into two equal parts. Of course, yours is only for life, Mrs. OVEN. On your death—or remarriage—a part to Mr. Trud here.

MR. OVEN [with a sob]. Yes.

MR. TRIMMER. I happened to bring a note of these provisions with me, for reference in the business which, or—for which there was no occasion.

[MR. TRIMMER rises, putting away his papers. That is all, I think. I won't trouble any longer. Terrible business. Very sorry. *[He goes to the door]* Perhaps you will look us up at the office in a day or two, Mr. OVEN. We have acted for your father for a good many years, and we shall be very pleased to act for you if you wish it.

TRUD. Thank you, sir. I dare say I shall.

[TRUD goes. MR. TRIMMER sits.  
*[A pause. MR. OVEN looks at TRUD]*

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

MRS OVENS. And now, perhaps you'll go, and leave me me with my grief.

FRED. I don't stir from here.

MRS OVENS. It was *his* wish you shouldn't stop in this use. I'll see *that* carried out, at any rate.

FRED. You're forgetting one thing, Mother.

MRS OVENS. What's that? [*EDIE returns.*]

FRED. This is *my* house now. He left it me in his will.

MRS OVENS *sits up and stares at him.*] You're not boss here

longer. Neither is *he*. I'm master of the house. [*MRS*

*she rises to her feet.*] It's not me that's got to clear out; you.

MRS OVENS. Me!

EDIE. Fred, you'll not turn her out to-night?

FRED. I will indeed.

MRS OVENS. I won't go.

FRED. If you don't go I'll put you out.

MRS OVENS. You wouldn't dare.

FRED. There's nothing I'd like better.

[*MRS OVENS hesitates a second and then breaks down.*]

MRS OVENS. Oh! I can't go to-night. To think that I saying to Edie only just now what a worry he was, not wing that he'd never trouble me again. [*Approaching us*  
] Fred.

FRED [*implacable*]. Get your hat and coat and take yourself off.

MRS OVENS. Edie, what am I to do?

EDIE. You'd better come home with me to-night, if he as it.

FRED. I do mean it.

[*MRS OVENS dries her eyes and gets up again.*]

MRS OVENS. You're glad that he's dead. [*She goes out*

EDIE. I'm not, though he was a hard man and he treated

## THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

me harshly. I'd give a good deal if I hadn't stood there and cursed him a short while ago.

EDIE [turning on him]. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Fred Owens. I never heard of such a thing. What, turn a wife out of the house when her husband's not yet cold!

FRED [sullenly]. She was for turning me out.

EDIE. You know what her temper is. I thought better of you, indeed I did. No Christian would do what you're doing. [MRS OWENS returns with coat and bonnet on. Fred, let her stay to-night. She's your father's wife, remember.

FRED. That's why I'm turning her out. [Strolling over to MR OWENS and addressing him] I'll show you who's master of the house now.

MRS OWENS. There's no need to waste words on him, Edie. I wouldn't stop in his house now if he went down on his bended knees. Come along. [EDIE goes out.] Good night, Fred Owens. You're master of the house, and may you pass a pleasant night in it with the man you cursed when he sat dead in his chair. [MRS OWENS goes out.

[The front door bangs. FRED shivers and moves to the front of the table and sits on the edge. He laughs quietly.

FRED. Pleasant night. Why shouldn't I? [To MR OWENS] You won't interfere with me. I'm not afraid of you. What is there to be afraid of? [He looks round fearfully and his eye again returns to MR OWENS' figure.] You can't turn me out of doors now. I'm boss here. [The figure does not take any notice. FRED shivers again.] I'll go round to the "King's Arms" and have a drink, there'll be company there. [To MR OWENS quickly] But I'll come back for the night, mind you. You'll not drive me away. [He goes to the gas and turns it out, leaving the room in perfect

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

*'arkness. He gropes his way to the door. Here he pauses.]*  
*'ve no money. [He thinks.] They always used to keep*  
*ome money in the sideboard drawer. [He gropes his way*  
*o the sideboard on the extreme right and stumbles against a*  
*hair.] Can't see a thing, and I've no matches. Wait a*  
*minute. [He crosses to the window and pulls up the blind.*  
*Bright moonlight strikes through the window. He crosses to*  
*he sideboard and easily finds the drawer, opens it and searches.*  
*There is no money to be found. He takes a cash-box and turns*  
*towards the window with it to examine it carefully. As he*  
*tuns he comes full on the silent figure of MR OVENS, sitting*  
*gid in his chair, shrouded in white, ghastly in the glare of*  
*e moon. FRED starts back with an oath and drops the cash-*  
*box.] You can't frighten me. You shan't turn me out, I*  
*ll you. I'm master of the house. [He sits on the edge of*  
*e table looking at the figure for a long space. Then he*  
*eaks in a low, strained voice.] Don't look at me like that.*  
*on't look at me like that! I didn't know you were dead*  
*hen I cursed you. [Another pause: he shudders and*  
*vers his face with his hands.] God! I can't stand it.*

*[He steals silently out of the room. MR OVENS sits in*  
*his shroud in the moonlight, master of the house.*  
*The front door is heard closing.*

THE CURTAIN DESCENDS VERY SLOWLY

FRIENDS  
A PLAY IN ONE ACT  
By HERBERT FARJON

CHARACTERS

DAN DONAGAN, *an undertaker*  
JOHN O'FLAHERTY, *a doctor*  
FATHER MURPHY  
VILLAGERS

SCENE. *A roadside.*

This play was first produced at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on November 20, 1917, with the following cast:

*Dan Donagan* . . . ARTHUR SHIELDS  
*John O'Flaherty* . . . PETER NOLAN  
*Father Murphy* . . . LOUIS O'CONNOR  
*Villagers*

Mr HERBERT FOSSETT is a well-known dramatic critic whose work has appeared in the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Herald*, and *The Weekly Westminster*, as well as in weekly and monthly periodicals. He also collaborated with Mr Horace Hornell in the recently produced play "Advertising April."

"Friends" is a delightfully Irish comedy, and belongs to the same class as Lady Gregory's "Spreading the News" and "The Rising of the Moon." There is humour in the original situation—the mutual affection of the doctor and the undertaker which must be concealed at all costs—and if one accepts that the subsequent developments are logical and ludicrous enough. The characters are vividly revealed and the dialogue is excellent.

## FRIENDS<sup>1</sup>

SCENE: *A road, a ditch, and a hedge. Many stars, and a full moon. The orchestration of a merry-go-round is grinding out tunes off stage.*

DAN DONAGAN and JOHN O'FLAHERTY creep on. JOHN carries a lantern.

DAN [*furtively*] Whisht now, is there anybody coming?

JOHN I can't see the spick of a soul. All Glegannon's away, I tell you, after packin' us an' gawgans at the fair.

DAN [*plucking at JOHN'S sleeve*] But Patrick is digging for his pound puce in the till by. If he should see us!

JOHN [*slaking his arm loose*] Pshaw, Patrick is blind as a bat.

DAN [*whining*] Well, Jim an' Tanser have put up the banes, an' 'tis a fine dry night for counting.

JOHN Jim an' Tanser will be at the fair, I tell you, passing words of passion in the swingboats.

DAN Well, if Tom Brady should be visiting his sick aunt, an' miss his way, an' strike this part by mistake, an' find us together?

JOHN How would Tom Brady miss his way, and his aunt is so wicked at all, and he never visiting her when she is or is not?

DAN Arrah, Johnnie, I don't like the risk, I do not like it.

<sup>1</sup> Appl's attention regarding amateur performers of this play should be addressed to Howard Samuel French, Ltd., 11, South Lambeth Street, Strand, London, W.C. 2, or 25 West 44th Street, New York.



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

What would I do, the dead men all to be going to Shamus Morgan? 'Tis little enough the undertaking brings me now, an' me no hand at these devil's own new-fangled cremations.

JOHN. 'Tis little enough the doctoring brings me either, and all Glengannon in the blasted bloom of health. But what I say to Sarah is the good sense—the less you have, the less you have to lose. So let you be sitting down now under this bit of bush an' playing aces under the moon with no fuss at all.

C. *(Sitting down with back to hedge, and producing an old pack of cards.)*

DAN. Sure, it isn't telling herself you are the way our friendship would shame the love of Jonathan an' David into a nod and a look?

JOHN. How would I be letting out our secret to a pack o' blabbing women! Settle on the grass now, an' give over thakin'.

DAN *(sitting)*. Keep wary then, if anybody should come the way you're looking, while I watch down the road for Ballymogh. An' let us make a plan, if they should uprise on us by surprise, to be kicking an' scratching an' tearing one another's flesh.

JOHN. That is a good plan, and it's call you names I wish they wouldn't print in a private paper. Ah, Danle don't isn't it a pleasant thing to be having here like lovers on the sly and not a soul to blame us for our friendship? An' isn't it a strange thing, the like of which I never heard, to be enemies by day an' wauling in the open, an' fierin' right an' shakin' to each other's houses under the stars an' thieves before the point!

*(NATHAN MURPHY enters from R. They do not see him.)*  
DAN. Faith, I shan't darken 'tis not it makes me, but the way we can't be with each other all times. An'

## FRIENDS

sadder still it makes me the way I must be saying hard sayings of you behind your back, an' talking distant talk to you with others by.

JOHN. Ah, Dannie, Dannie, I'd give herself an' seven pounds things to be the way they were before we let on to have quarrelled.

DAN. And I would give one-half or one-third of all I have, which is little enough, God knows.

JOHN. It is better to be with you, Dannie, than digging up five-pound notes by the spadeful in Australy, the way I'd come strolling home in golden boots and a diamond tail-coat.

DAN. And it is better to be with you, Johnnie, than to wake up an' find a choir of angels round my bed coaxing and wheedling me to lend a hand in heaven.

FATHER MURPHY [*regarding them objectively*] Well, well, 'tis the quare world, surely!

[*At the sound of his voice JOHN seizes DAN by the hair and begins shaking him.*]

DAN. Leave go my hair, you devil's rat you, or I'll bite the heart out of you!

JOHN [*with simulated fury*]. How dare you be saying 'tis an ill doctor I am? How dare you be saying Denis Harn would never have come by his eternal glory if I hadn't been drinking quart-pots at the Golden Harp? Take that, you dirty little rascal, an' may the Lord put a twist on your tongue till you can speak the truth only!

DAN. I'll scratch your eyes out!

FATHER MURPHY [*undisturbed*]. Whisht now, stop your play-acting. Have I not heard you with my own ears swearing loving oaths under the bush there and telling your hate to be a sham only?

DAN [*giving up the game and blabbering with fear*]. Oh, Father Murphy, Father Murphy, you won't tell on us, for the love of Christ you won't tell the neighbours us not to

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

be the biggest breathing enemies in Glengannon? [*To JOHN, whisperingly*] Didn't I say 'twas a risk, Johnnie, did I *not* say it, us to be talking an' playing in the open?

FATHER MURPHY. Listen to me now. I am not the man to judge his fellow-creatures by their deeds, and I do not blame you two for loving one another the way all good Christian souls should love one another to the Judgment Day. But tell me how it is you have fallen into the unholy slough of deceit, and maybe I'll not let on at all. Do you not despise one another now?

CHURCH [*gruffly*]. We do not.

FATHER MURPHY. Then why do you make a sham before all Glengannon to be the biggest haters next God and the devil?

DAN [*under his breath to JOHN*]. Be wary, John, he has made no promise, and he the biggest bibble-babbler in all Glengannon.

JOHN [*to DAN*]. Hold your tongue, Dan, the cat is out now. We've nothing left but put our trust in God and notuffle him. [*Aloud*] You see, Father, 'tis not a good policy, doctor and an undertaker to be hail fellow and well met with one another.

FATHER MURPHY. And why not?

JOHN. Ah, you'd know that if you were in our calling. In the old days Dannie and I were never apart, but there came a bad spell of sickness in the town, an' they called it an' sign the doctor an' the undertaker to be so thick, an' put about me to be letting folk out of the world for the sake Dan here.

FATHER MURPHY. I never heard tell of that before.

DAN. Ah, 'twas before you came to Glengannon, Dan d I made up to have a mighty fuss an' split apart, the way might recover our custom. An' that's twenty years by, d we all that time meeting in the dark, an' visiting one

## FRIENDS

another in the dead of night, and writing to one another in sly writings, an' anapping at one another on the green with loving words.

DAN [*beseechingly*]. Ah, Father, you won't tell, you will not tell now!

FATHER MURPHY. How do I know it isn't the truth they were saying, and John here doesn't go killing off his patients like flies upon the window-pane?

DAN [*snivelling*]. How do you know, is it? May I drive my own coffin if there's as much as a blessed microbe died since October last!

JOHN. An' may I write my own death-certificate if there's a man, woman, or child had so much as the sneezes since November!

FATHER MURPHY. Well, well, that's true, that's true.

DAN [*coaxingly*]. Ah, 'tis a good man you are, Father, a good man, surely, and if I'm taken first it's a dazzling word I'll put in for you with the Lord in heaven. You'll not tell now, will you?

FATHER MURPHY. 'Tis an unwise thing to be making promises, Dan Donagan.

DAN. 'Tis unwise to be making promises any time, surely, and I'm the last would ask such a foolish thing of a sage man like you. But do you think you'll tell? It would be no promise now to be saying you don't *think* you'll tell.

FATHER MURPHY. Mind this, Dan, a good man never came to harm yet, telling or no telling.

DAN. 'Tis the good sense you are talking, dear Father; a good man never came to harm yet, surely. But do you think me a good man? Say you think me a good man, an' then I'll know you'll not tell.

FATHER MURPHY [*disregarding him*]. Well, I'll be getting along now, but maybe I'll see you again before the night is out.

[*Going.*]

## ONE ACT PLAYS OF TO DAY

*Enter a man, and carrying him by the arm.* Why are you stopping this way, Father? 'Tis not that way will bring you to your home at all.

*Enter a woman.* What are you going to my house for, John? Can it be that way leads to the door only?

*Man.* 'Tis a dirt road, surely. A blizzard may might strike down the life of this road.

*Woman.* 'Tis not coming any way I am, Dan. Don't go, for it is to the fire I will I am going.

*Man.* Arrah, what would you be doing among the rogues in Clonsilla, and you a hole in the wall?

*Woman.* What would I be doing among the rogues and ruffians? Well, as it will be, we'll see.

[Exit R.]

*Man (shouting).* He'll tell, he'll tell! He'll spread it, as sure as I've made my last home. Do you think he'll tell now?

*John (doubtful).* I don't know, I don't know.

*Dan (urgently).* Of course, you don't know, but do you think he'll tell now?

*John.* Well then, it wouldn't give me the stagger.

*Dan (in a bad way).* Arrah, I'm destroyed entirely. Did I not tell you it was a risk to be playing here in the broad night, and you saying not a flea in Clonsilla but was picking off colernuts at the door?

*John.* It can't be helped now. It is not your whining will save ourselves. Come, come, Dan, let us put our two heads together an' think what's best to be done.

*Dan (shrill and despairing).* Arrah, 'tis your fault entirely! Was it not the way you were facing that Father Murphy came? Why must you be so smitten with your kings an' queens not to keep a better look-out?

*John (roughly).* 'Tis no use whining, I tell you!

*Dan.* 'Tis lost we are, surely! And why did you blurt

## FRIENDS

out the whole tale with a tongue would put shame on a jabbering magpie?

JOHN. That'll do now!

DAN. Do, will it?

JOHN. What use would it be to lie at all, and be listening to our talk behind our backs?

DAN. What use would it be not to lie, and be a gossip would clack out tittle-tattle to the Lord Himself?

JOHN [*with contempt*]. Psha, 'tis a weak and wobbly kind of a man you are, Dan Donagan; I've known that a long time past.

DAN. Wobbly, is it? If you could keep your tongue from wobbling, it's prosperous men we'd be this hour, and not twisting in the grip of ruin.

JOHN. Keep my tongue from wobbling, is it? It's many a time I've kept my tongue from saying to you what my mind knew well an' better in the days gone by.

DAN. What did your mind know, John O'Flaherty; what did your slippery, scabby little mind know? Can't you speak out like a decent man now, and not go crawling up back-ways in your talk?

JOHN. What did my mind know, is it? 'Tis a sly way you have with the cards, Dan Donagan, an' 'tis a bad penny you paid me with the first time ever you lost.

DAN. 'Twixt the same bad penny you paid me with the time before, and have been paying me with these twenty years.

JOHN [*menacingly*]. Is it a swindler I am?

DAN [*a little cowed*]. Maybe you are an' maybe you are not.

JOHN. Is it a swindler I am? Who is it is crawling up back ways in his talk this moment?

DAN. 'Tis only following you I am up the filthy reeking place.

JOHN. Is it a swindler I am? Speak now!

## ONE ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

DAN. You wouldn't say the best you are? Because I'm saying that I don't want it I don't!

DAN. Then I'll ask you, Dan Douglas, who was it told the owner of the house of spot that I kept it?

DAN. A fellow as was telling the like of that you're been lying all these years, on betting on you know and me know you as innocent as the babe new born! Is that how you play now, you to know we both know, an' me only know? I know myself!

JOHN. That'll be a hot day for you the day you send for me to the house, and it co'ld be that a fine scratch.

DAN. And a worse day for you the day I drive you to the cemetery. A wild, galloping, hedge-an'-ditch funeral it will be.

JOHN. It is a cheat and a coward you are, Dan Douglas, and a ditty man would soil the fingers of the devil himself. I wouldn't spoil my spit on you.

DAN. What is that you are saying?

JOHN. It is a cheat and a coward you are, and a man of no marrow at all.

DAN. If you were to say that to my old father I would knock you down on the spot.

JOHN. What is that you would do on the spot now?

DAN. I know what I would do!

JOHN. Is it knock me down you would?

DAN. It is then!

*[They fight. Enter FATHER MURPHY and some VILLAGERS, R., from the fair with lanterns.]*

FATHER MURPHY. There they are. Well, well, the simple fellows! If they aren't trying to trick us with their fighting again!

DAN *[struggling]*. I'll give you one for that!

JOHN *[struggling]*. Let go my hair, or I'll knead you to a paste!

## FRIENDS

FIRST VILLAGER. Give over shamming now. Father Murphy has told us your device. 'Tis no good making faces at one another from this out.

JOHN [to DAN]. Kick, would you?

SECOND VILLAGER. Come, come, John O'Flaherty, you've made fools of us for twenty years, but that's done. Get off his chest now.

JOHN [violently] Swindler am I?

FATHER MURPHY. Drag them apart, some of you

[The VILLAGERS separate them and stand in two opposing groups, holding them by the arms.]

JOHN [trying to free himself] Let me go, let me go. I've not begun on him yet.

DAN [trying to free himself] I'll pay you out for this.

SECOND VILLAGER. 'Tis high wonder they took us in. They'd make their fortunes play a trug.

JOHN. It's none of your business, James Brady, if I've a mind to smash a man. Let me go, I tell you.

FATHER MURPHY. That'll do now. All Glengannon knows Damon and Pythias no better friends than yourselves.

DAN. Me friends with that cheat?

FATHER MURPHY. Come, come, I tell you all Glengannon knows your secret. I told them at the fair.

DAN. Ah, I knew it was to go blabbing you left us!

FATHER MURPHY. Yes, Dan, it was to go blabbing, as you say. But I hope to all will reward you. I had a mind to help you both.

DAN. Psha, how would it help, telling out our secret to the whole town?

FIRST VILLAGER. There, Dan, you've convinced yourself now. 'Tis no good any longer you are John making a pretence to have quarrelled.

JOHN. But we have quarrelled, I tell you - we've quarrelled.



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

since Father Murphy left. He called me a blabber and a swindler.

SECOND VILLAGER. Well, if that isn't the shabbiest make-up ever two men invented!

THIRD VILLAGER. It's not a yarn the like of that yarn will take us in again, John O'Flaherty.

JOHN. We *have* quarrelled, I tell you.

DAN [*still struggling*]. Swindler!

FIRST VILLAGER. It's no good, Dannie. The game's up.

FATHER MURPHY. Listen to me now. I told you I wanted to help you, and I have helped you. The folk heard of the long years you'd lam in hidin'—your love, and when I reminded them there hadn't been a death or a sickness since November last, it's honest men they named you, and you all that time with a grander chance than ever of playing into the hands of heaven on the sly.

FIRST VILLAGER. So we will let all go by, Dan an' John, an' bear no grudge, an' 'twill be a mighty pleasure to us, after the wrong we did you, to see you two walking an' playing an' drinking together all the days of your life.

DAN. Me walk about with that spawn!

JOHN. Me drink with that rib of Satan!

SECOND VILLAGER. Psha, 'tis beyond a joke. What kind of a fool do they take us for? 'Tis an insult, I declare.

THIRD VILLAGER. 'Tis no good talking to them, surely. If you'd rather go on shamming than have my sicknesses, John O'Flaherty, and if you'd rather go on shamming than have my corpses, Dan Donagan, do so, and it's others I find for the jobs.

FATHER MURPHY. 'Tis a foolish thing to make a pretence to be enemies now, and you fast friends.

DAN. 'Tis a foolisher thing to make a pretence to be friends and us fast enemies.

FATHER MURPHY. Come, come, don't you see by keepi-

## FRIENDS

up that game you'll only turn the folk against you? It saved your practices in the days gone by, but 'twill only ruin them now. If you want the doctoring and the burying you must give over shamming.

JOHN [*under his breath to DAN*]. 'Tis the only thing for us, Dan Donagan. Father Murphy is right. 'Tis you or starvation!

DAN [*to JOHN*]. That's the first true word ever I heard you speak, John O'Flaherty. You or starvation it is!

JOHN. Well, you it must be, though it's a speck of mildew you are!

DAN. And you it must be, though the hogs themselves'd leave you for the wash.

FATHER MURPHY. Come to sense now, and take one another by the hand—[*he joins their hands*—and bless one another in the great piece of luck that has fallen on you.

JOHN [*aloud*]. God bless you, Danny. [*Aside*] Damn you!

DAN [*aside*]. Damn you, Johnny. [*Aloud*] God bless you.

FATHER MURPHY. That's right, that's right. Isn't it the pleasing sight to see them united again before us after these many years?

FIRST VILLAGER. It is so. A power of happiness to you both from this on!

SECOND VILLAGER. 'Tis dancing an' singing we'll have this night at the fair, with John an' Dan together on a throne to watch the boys an' girls in a fling of joy.

THIRD VILLAGER. We will that. An' they shall toast one another at my expense in the night of all.

FATHER MURPHY. And now, you two, walk before arm in arm, and lead the way back to the fair, where all Glen-pannon is waiting to greet you with mighty cheers. Line up two and two behind them, boys, and away we go! Quick march!

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

*[The procession begins to move off R. The orchestrian strikes up again.]*

DAN. Merciful powers, don't squeeze my arm so tight!

JOHN. 'Tis the affection I bear you makes me do it, Danny dear. Stop shoving me into the bramble-bushes, now!

DAN. Arrah, I can't get close enough to you for love, Johnnie darling.

*[They go off. The VILLAGERS follow, cheering.]*  
FATHER MURPHY *[looking up at the stars]*. Well, well, 'tis a good night for a good work, and 'tis a good thought to think that two fast friends the like of Dan Donagan and John O'Flaherty will always be in the one place together from this out.

CURTAIN

# MIMI

*From "Scènes de la Vie de Bohème"*

BY OLIVE CONWAY

## CHARACTERS

RODOLPHE, a poet

MARCEL, a painter

BLANCHETON, a sugar refiner

MIMI

MUSSETT } *gossamers*

PRÉMIÉ }

*Paris, 1845    A work girl's room in the Latin  
Quarter.*

"*Une Saison de La Vie de Bohème*," says Arthur Symonds, "sums up an epoch, give us the map of a country—it is the Bohemia of the Latin Quarter as it existed at the Romantic epoch . . . the gayest and most melancholy country in the world . . . Maupassant writes of a life which is itself a tragic comedy in fancy dress, a life wholly in exaggeration. No one is quite sincere in Bohemia, because sincerity is a respectable virtue."

Puccini's opera *La Bohème* has, more than the original book, familiarized the world with Mimi and her companions of the Bohemian life. In Miss Conway's play, which is taken from her volume of *Customs Plays*,<sup>1</sup> two episodes of Bohemia are telescoped to illustrate the love of Rodolpho and Mimi, and their life with its own philosophy, "a laughing kind of Stoicism," gay, hapless, irresponsible, eternally youthful.

<sup>1</sup> French, 21 6d.

## MIMI'

*The room in the Latin Quarter of MIMI and MUSETTE, young girls who are flower-makers. Window, C., admits to small balcony, bounded by a hand-rail. Table, chairs; bed, which would probably be exposed to view, but may be unseen behind a curtaining. Door L. Fireplace R.*

MUSETTE sits at table at work on artificial flowers. Enter MIMI, halless, with shawl over her shoulders.

MUSETTE [*picking up envelope from table*]. A letter.

MIMI. For me? From Rodolphe?

MUSETTE. Not unless Monsieur Rodolphe has been ennobled.

[*Gives the letter.*]

MIMI. Oh, from one of those gentlemen. They write fine letters, those aristocrats. They offer to throw the world at my adorable feet.

MUSETTE. You know the inside of a letter without the inconvenience of opening it?

MIMI. This is not my day for opening a letter with a decorated envelope. This is only the third day.

MUSETTE. The third day?

MIMI. The third day that Rodolphe has not been near me [*on mantel*]. On the sixth day I may see Monsieur le Vicomte or Monsieur le riche man who makes me the rich

Our performances of this play should  
French, Ltd., 26 Southampton Street,  
West 45th Street, New York.

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

man's offer. Oh, Musette, Musette, *never fall in love with a poet.*

MUSETTE. I fell in love with a painter. Is there so much to choose between a painter and a poet? Neither is able to make us the rich man's offer.

MIMI. Who wants that offer? But your painter is visible. You see Marcel. But Rodolphe? Is he out? No. The porter assures me each day that he has not gone out. In his room up there [*points to ceiling*], swearing when he sees me that he loves me, and staying in his room so that he does not see me.

MUSETTE. It is without doubt an epic which detains him.

MIMI. I am his epic. It [*Goes to letter, then replaces it*] No: he can stay six days with his Muse, but one day longer and I—— Oh!

RODOLPHE [*off C.*]. Never was I trained to be a mountaineer.

MIMI [*to window*]. Rodolphe! Oh, be careful.

[*She looks up as if he is climbing down*

RODOLPHE [*off*]. It is necessity, and Mimi is the name of my necessity.

MIMI [*with relief*]. Oh, you are safe.

[RODOLPHE enters by balcony—a young poet, strangely dressed in baggy check trousers and, for the rest, in a turban and a bright Turkish cloak of a comic-opera absurdity.

But you——

RODOLPHE. Behold me! Witness the depth of my humiliation. Realize the desperation which drove me to you in the garments of an Oriental from an opera.

MUSETTE. I don't realize anything. You invade our room

MIMI. That is true. You have the conduct as well as the costume of a Turk.

## MIMI

RODOLPHE. But I am without cigarettes.

MIMI. Cigarettes! Was it for that you——?

RODOLPHE [*drawing her to window*]. See! On that gilded balcony a dandy smokes a Havana. Look up. On the floor above an artist wafts a fragrant mist from a pipe with an amber mouthpiece. See below, those workmen with their cutty-pipes. There is nobody who does not smoke, save I and my uncle's chimneys.

MUSETTE. The chimneys of your uncle? What——?

RODOLPHE. My uncle, the man who demands of me, of a poet, a manual on chimneys. My uncle, who locks me in my room and takes away the key, and makes assurance doubly sure by abstracting my clothes and leaving me in these to prevent my going out until I have completed his execrable *Guide to Chimneys*. My uncle, the maker of novels, who is to give me fifty francs for the work which he will sign. My uncle, who leaves me food, but forgets tobacco.

MIMI. And for an uncle, for the fifty francs of your uncle, you consented to be locked up from me, and when you come at last, is it for my sake? No: it is for tobacco.

RODOLPHE. Which you do not provide.

MIMI. Your advance is intolerable. Fifty francs!

RODOLPHE. The landlord requires to be satisfied.

MIMI. Since when did landlords count with you? Since when did you forget the art of moving in a hurry?

RODOLPHE. Since you occupied the room below mine.

MIMI. Oh, so it is my fault? Mine! I turn you into money-grubber, I cause you to forget poetry and to write manuals on chimneys.

MUSETTE. It seems to me that monsieur has sacrificed his art for you.

MIMI. But it is not for me: it is for a landlord. He says so. He admits it.



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

MUSETTE. If I were to go out, I think he could make clear to you.

RODOLPHE. I think my actions might speak louder than words.

MIMI. You shall not drive her out.

RODOLPHE. The alternative is that you and I go out. [*Takes coin from pocket.*] Fifty sous. It will not be truffe and champagne, but——

MIMI. Go out? Go out in that disguise?

RODOLPHE. I have sacrificed my art for you. For you we'll also sacrifice my pride.

MIMI. And my feelings? I am to lunch, am I, with something from the wardrobe of the Odéon? I remind you that it is not carnival time, monsieur. If I am to lunch I will lunch with nothing less respectable than a black coat.

RODOLPHE. A black coat? I never owned one.

MIMI. It appears then that my lunch will not be with you.

RODOLPHE. Mimi, don't ask impossibilities.

MIMI. To love, monsieur, nothing is impossible. You climb down a balcony for a cigarette, for a bagatelle like tobacco. For love, you will not even find a black coat

[*Musette makes a cigarette*]

RODOLPHE. Are black coats to be found in a lady's room?

MIMI. To me it is nothing where you find the coat, Monsieur Ali Rodolphe.

RODOLPHE. So far, I have not even found the cigarette. It seems to me that I have risked my neck for nothing. Well, I can risk my neck again. I can go back by the ladder of death, and if I am so fortunate as to arrive I can resume my labours of a galley-slave at the manual on chimneys.

[*At a table*]

MIMI. No! No!

RODOLPHE. But what is life to me?

MIMI. You have told me it is I who am all life to you.

## MIMI

And you would risk your life ? And why ? Because I have a caprice to lunch with you in a black coat. Caprice, monsieur ; do you deny me my caprice ? Would you forget the faith of the Quarter, renounce the goddess who controls our lives ? Caprice is queen, goddess, ruler of Bohemia—and you, a poet, would be a traitor to caprice ?

MUSETTE. In his need of tobacco he is not quite himself, Mimi.

MIMI. You have rolled him a cigarette !

RODOLPHE. You have the caprice that I do not smoke it !

MIMI. No. [*Passes it to him and lights match.*] It will assist you to discover a black coat

[MARCEL knocks at door. MUSETTE opens. The door is left open, showing the stair-landing.]

MARCEL. May I—— ? [*Sees RODOLPHE.*] Your absence is explained. You have been travelling. You return to us in the costume of——

[MARCEL'S own coat is a short jacket of velvet which  
- once was crimson, and is now a study in stains.]

RODOLPHE. Speaking of costumes, Marcel, have you such a thing as a black coat ?

MARCEL. Are you under the impression that there has been a revolution while you've been away ? A black coat ? I don't deny that I'm a man of ambition. At thirty I may possess a black coat. I may even wear it occasionally. Black coats are the emblems of success. But at present, my dear Rodolphe, my wardrobe is as you see, and you perceive the whole of it. Such as it is, I offer you the loan of any part of it without reserve.

RODOLPHE [*takes MARCEL'S hand and appeals to MIMI*]. Can a friend do more than offer me his trousers ?

MIMI. Only they are not required.

RODOLPHE. She has the caprice to be taken out by me in a black coat.

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-

MUSETTE. The demand is too reasonable to b

RODOLPHE. Reasonable !

MUSETTE. Decidedly. To amuse your uncl  
costume of an Arabian night.

RODOLPHE. Do I like it ?

MUSETTE. Do people like poisons ? No. 'T  
dotes, and the antidote to the robe of Bagn  
of the Rue de Rivoli.

MIMI. And love should find the way.

MARCEL. Even to the fantastic coats of th  
meQde the Rue de Rivoli ?

MIMI. Even to that, monsieur.

MARCEL [*taking off his coat*]. Then never st  
that friendship failed in the hour of need. F  
friend, take my coat.

MIMI. But yours is not a black coat.

MARCEL. It is a coat which can be blackened.  
soot in the chimney of mademoiselle ?

MIMI. I am to go out with a chimney-sweep

RODOLPHE. With a poet in a black coat, a  
demand, mademoiselle.

MIMI. It is an insult to the napery of the rest

RODOLPHE. The napery ? You do not supp  
eat in a restaurant where they have tablecloth  
where it is necessary to apply the curb of re.  
extravagance of luxurious ambition.

MIMI [*showing the letter*]. Is it ? An envel  
decoration, monsieur : an illustrious envelope w

[RODOLPHE *matches* : *she puts it behin*  
—an envelope which I have not opened, but  
points to the necessity on your part of providi  
coat which is not black with the grime of charco

MARCEL [*resuming his coat*]. You make a harsh

MIMI. I ask for faith in the goddess of the Qu

## MIMI

she sends to me the caprice to see Rodolphe in a black coat, she will send to him the means to gratify my caprice.

MARCEL. She must be, *mademoiselle*, a most hardworking goddess.

[*On the landing outside, as if puffing up the stairs, there appears the black coat. It is worn by one BLANCHERON, a stout provincial.*

BLANCHERON [*stopping in doorway*]. Messieurs, mesdames, is it much nearer heaven that the painter, Marcel, lives!

MARCEL. Naturally at the top, monsieur, for the purpose not of economy, but of the light. But I am Marcel, —

BLANCHERON [*still panting*]. Then permit me to state my business. My cousin, your landlord, has mentioned to me your talent as a portrait painter, and —

MUSETTE. A chair, monsieur. Please be seated.

BLANCHERON. Thank you. [*Introducing himself*] Blancheron of Nantes, sugar-refiner, formerly Mayor of Nantes, captain in the National Guard, and author of a pamphlet on sugar.

MARCEL. Honoured, monsieur.

BLANCHERON. Being about to visit the sugar plantations in the colonies, I wish to leave my family a souvenir—my portrait.

MARCEL. To be chosen by the former Mayor of Nantes is a great honour.

BLANCHERON. Consequently, the price will be low. The distinction of your sitters is in itself a reward.

MIMI. All the sitters of Monsieur Marcel have distinction, monsieur. Permit me to present to you your predecessor in his studio. [*Presents RODOLPHE.*] Monsieur le Marquis de Chatillon.

BLANCHERON [*leaps up and bows deeply*]. Monsieur.

[*RODOLPHE bows lightly.*

[*To MARCEL*] Pardon, monsieur. I made a mistake. It

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

was in my mind that when my cousin, your landlord, mentioned the price of a hundred francs, he was thinking of rent.

MARCEL. I have, as a favour, done portraits for so a price. Naturally, that does not include the hands.

BLANCHERON. We will exclude the hands.

MUSETTE. But, monsieur, with hands you could holding your pamphlet on sugar, which would be given to you. For a hundred and twenty francs Monsieur will—

MARCEL. You forget, Musette, that colours are this time of the year.

BLANCHERON. It varies with the season, like sugar.

MARCEL. Exactly, and this month—

BLANCHERON. But I will not pay more than a hundred and twenty francs, with hands and my pamphlet.

RODOLPHE. Oblige the gentleman, Marcel, my low, oblige him. You can paint marquises every day, it is not always that a Mayor of Nantes is in Paris.

MARCEL. I consent, monsieur, at the solicitation of Monsieur le Marquis.

BLANCHERON [*doorwards*]. Then we—

MIMI. But your coat, monsieur.

BLANCHERON. My coat?

MIMI. Do you not know that Marcel always sits in the robe which he has adopted for all his poses from those worn by members of the Academy?

BLANCHERON. A robe of the Academy! Oh!

RODOLPHE. You begin to perceive, monsieur, that you will receive overflowing value for your francs.

BLANCHERON. But I hoped to be painted at once in two days, and where does one obtain this robe?

RODOLPHE [*to MARCEL*]. You have finished with

## MIMI

MARCEL. Yes.

RODOLPHE. Then I am good-natured enough to offer the use of it to Monsieur the Mayor of Nantes.

BLANCHERON, Monsieur! From the shoulders of a marquis!

MIMI [*taking his coat*]. Permit me, monsieur.

RODOLPHE [*offering the robe*]. And permit me.

BLANCHERON. Oh! In the robe of the Academy, warm from the shoulders of a marquis! It is superb. In Nantes they will point at your portrait, monsieur, and they will tell this tale for ever.

MARCEL. I am at your service now if you will go upstairs.

[*Ushers him out* *Exit* BLANCHERON and MARCEL.

MIMI [*closing door*]. Now have you faith in the goddess?

MUSETTE. He even left his hat.

RODOLPHE [*taking off the turban*]. That is just as well.

[*He puts on BLANCHERON's coat.*

MUSETTE. And a hundred and twenty francs! Faith, Marcel should treat me well to-night—

MIMI. Yes: that is what Marcel can earn in an afternoon, while you—

RODOLPHE. I? I am in a black coat. It is true that it fits with moderation, but the cloth is of excellent quality.

[*MUSETTE sits to her flower-making.*

MIMI. So excellent that it does not appear to me to go with lunch at fifty sous for two.

RODOLPHE. Mimi, a caprice is a caprice.

MIMI. Is what?

RODOLPHE. You can say what you like about caprices, but they shouldn't have families. You are not, for example, going to decline to go out with me now that I have procured a black coat?

MIMI. I thought I procured it.



## MIMI

PHÉLIX. No. This one is rich, but he is not a milord. He is an esquire. Perhaps that is why he rises early. Dolores retires late, naturally.

MIMI. Reasonably.

PHÉLIX. And her paroquet screams when she comes home. The Englishman desires her to slay the paroquet, which disturbs his sleep.

MIMI. The pig.

PHÉLIX. Of course. And when she declines to sacrifice a life to the sloth of an Englishman, he fires pistols in his room in the morning to disturb her sleep. So she calls the police, and his pistols are removed from him, but is he reconciled to her paroquet? No—he engages Schaunard. The law permits him to make music in his room from morning till night. "But," says Schaunard, "the lady will not find my music disagreeable. My sonata——" "Pah," replies the Englishman, "you will play scales. No, not scales—one scale from five in the morning till evening and she will go mad." It is not indeed serious art, but what of that? The Englishman pays two hundred francs a month for a row, and to-day Schaunard has received the first month's pay. There? *[She rings coin on table.]*

MIMI. It is the wages of heroism.

RODOLPHE. Even as I was heroic with a manual on chimneys. My feat is for another day, Mimi.

MIMI. You said it was for the landlord.

RODOLPHE. Bah! To the devil with all landlords!

MIMI. You mean that? You mean that when your uncle pays you will spend it in a night as Schaunard does?

RODOLPHE. I mean it.

MIMI *[getting the letter and tearing it]*. Then to the devil with all letters.

RODOLPHE. Mimi. *[Takes her hand.]*



100.2 10 1 15 100 100 100 100

[illegible]

[ 200 ]

$$m_{\text{eff}} = \frac{1}{2} \left( \frac{1}{m_1} + \frac{1}{m_2} \right) \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{1}{m_{\text{eff}}} = \frac{1}{m_1} + \frac{1}{m_2}$$

now [during Jesus' words] through his power, that  
won't stop, there there is. There's more of that and  
all. The Kingdom is not of this world, but yours is  
such.

[illegible]

Waffen (Schusswaffen) sind verboten.

When I saw her feet under a heavy Northern sky  
 but the shadow of a creek and the echo of a Rhine  
 (River) At night you heard a theme to buy the first  
 of Mervyn's School.

Went to the

son. Day was: "It's a time. When make you dream  
that you are going to live not ever."

**MAYNARD, MARY ANN**

What are the 4 ways of doing?

**PAINE, Robert**

WALTER. No, but you speak of youth, and when we're young we do not speak of youth—we live it.

must. Well, I *am* young and I spoke of youth, and I'm too young to be ill. Now go and buy the feast, Musette, the dinner of the heroic rival of a parrot.

PURMIL. Yes, come, Musette. It will take four arms to carry back that feast. *[Exeunt PURMIL and MUSETTE.]*

ment [*defiantly, as Robert looks satisfied*]. Oh! She makes us out a pretty pair. You are prudent and I am *Oh!*

RODOLPHE. If I promise never to be prudent again, will you promise never to be ill?

## MIMI

MIMI (*tasting her bread*). I assert to you that my tooth is my tooth, and if it wants to ache it——

ROBERT. Oh, it shall, the libertine, but——

MIMI. And we are never ill. It is the law. We are never prudent and we are never ill.

ROBERT. Sometimes we are hungry, Mimi, and fifty roubles are burning a hole in my pocket. Shall we——?

MIMI. But to-night we dine. (*Points to ceiling*) I hope that in Turkey you have not grown into a glutton. Lunch and dine on the same day!

ROBERT. It has been done.

MIMI. Indeed? And Monneur the Mayor of Nantes? Would you have him come down from Mauché's studio to find his coat at large?

ROBERT. That is a risk we run, but I didn't know that it was troubling you.

MIMI. Does it not occur to you that there is a change in the situation?

ROBERT (*takes out half franc*). I will have fifty roubles. I will wear a black coat.

MIMI (*slings the half franc out at window*). There!

ROBERT. Oh, certain is that makes a change of situation.

MIMI (*speaking to door*). A d'ye hear that? Were we not to go out to enjoy the conquest of provinces? Is that not so? And do we not now enjoy complete peace by staying in?

ROBERT. Mimi! (*taking her out to door*.)

MIMI. Oh, what a lot of time you've wasted!

ROBERT. I didn't dare believe that my penitence was over.

MIMI. Never be so sure of me three days ago. For I like (*She puts her hand on his chest when he is in an ecstasy*) Oh Robert, if I alone to be away from you, that would be quite a different thing.

# THE LIFE OF THE DAY

It is not a life of the day, but a life of the day.

It is not a life of the day, but a life of the day.

It is not a life of the day, but a life of the day.

It is not a life of the day, but a life of the day.

It is not a life of the day, but a life of the day.

THE LIFE OF THE DAY

# THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

## A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By NORMAN MCKINNEY

*Founded on an incident in Victor Hugo's novel  
"Les Misérables"*

## CHARACTERS

THE BISHOP

THE COACHMAN

PISHOU, the Bishop's valet, a valet

MARIA

SINGERS OF CHORUS

TIME. *The beginning of last century*

PLACE. *Strasbourg about thirty miles from Paris*

This play was first produced at the Duke of York's Theatre on August 14, 1901, with the following cast

<i>The Bishop</i>	Mr. A. E. Carter
<i>The Coachman</i>	Mr. Norman McKinney
<i>Pishou</i>	Miss Florence Carter
<i>Maria</i>	Miss Constance Watson
<i>Singers of Chorus</i>	Mr. Percy Wainwright

© Mr NORMAN McKINNEL found the idea for the following play in Victor Hugo's masterpiece *Les Misérables*. The incident is described in the opening chapters of the novel, but although the Bishop himself disappears from the story his spirit runs through the whole book as a recurrent motif. He reveals the tremendous power of simple disinterested goodness.

Mr McKinnel, being an extremely fine actor, saw the dramatic possibilities of the story, and adapted it for presentation on the stage.

An interesting account of the author of "The Bishop's Candlesticks" may be read in *The Twentieth-Century Theatre*,\* by Frank Vernon.

## THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS<sup>1</sup>

SCENE. *The kitchen of the widow's cottage. It is plainly but substantially furnished. Doors R. and L. and L. C. Window R. C. Fireplace with heavy mantelpiece down R. Oak settle with cushions behind door L. C. Table in window R. C. with writing materials and crucifix (wood). Eight-day clock R. of window. Kitchen dresser with cupboard to lock down L. Oak dining table R. C. Chairs, stools, etc. If inter wood scene without. On the mantelpiece are two very handsome candlesticks which look strangely out of place with their surroundings.*

MARY and PERCIVAL discovered. MARY stirring some soup on the fire. PERCIVAL laying the cloth, etc.

PERCIVAL. Mary, isn't the soup boiling yet?

MARY. Not yet, madam.

PERCIVAL. Well it ought to be. You haven't tended the fire properly, child.

MARY. But, madam, you yourself made the fire up.

PERCIVAL. Don't answer me back like that. It is rude.

MARY. Yes, madam.

PERCIVAL. Then don't let me have to rebuke you again.

MARY. No, madam.

<sup>1</sup> Any actions regarding amateur performances of this play should be addressed to Messrs Samuel French, Ltd., 26 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W. C. 2, or 25 West 45th Street, New York.



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MARIE and PERONNET discovered. MARIE stirring some soup on the fire. PERONNET laying the cloth, etc.

PERONNET. Marie, isn't the soup boiling yet?

MARIE. Not yet, madam.

PERONNET. Well it ought to be. You haven't tended the fire properly, child.

MARIE. But, madam, you yourself made the fire up.

PERONNET. Don't answer me back like that. It is rude.

MARIE. Yes, madam.

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MARIE. No, madam.

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## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

PERSONÉ. I wonder where my brother can be. It is after eleven o'clock [*looking at the clock*] and no sign of him. Marie!

MARIE. Yes, madam.

PERSONÉ. Did Monseigneur the Bishop leave any message for me?

MARIE. No, madam.

PERSONÉ. Did he tell you where he was going?

MARIE. Yes, madam.

PERSONÉ. "Yes, madam" [*imitating*]. Then why haven't you told me, stupid!

MARIE. Madam didn't ask me.

PERSONÉ. But that is no reason for your not telling me, is it?

MARIE. Madam said only this morning I was not to chatter, so I thought——

PERSONÉ. Ah, mon Dieu, you thought! Ah! It is hopeless.

MARIE. Yet, madam.

PERSONÉ. Don't keep saying "Yet, madam," like a parrot, nincompoop.

MARIE. No, madam.

PERSONÉ. Well. Where did monseigneur say he was going?

MARIE. To my mother's, madam.

PERSONÉ. To your mother's indeed! And why, pray?

MARIE. Monseigneur asked me how she was, and I told him she was feeling poorly.

PERSONÉ. You told him she was feeling poorly, did you? And so my brother is to be kept out of his bed, and without his supper because you told him she was feeling poorly. There's gratitude for you!

MARIE. Madam, the soup is boiling!

PERSONÉ. Then pour it out, fool, and don't chatter!

[*Marie about to do so*] No, no. Not like that, here let me do it, and do you put the salt-cellars on the table—the silver ones.

MARIE. The silver ones, madam?

PERSONÉ. Yes, the silver ones. Are you deaf as well as stupid?

MARIE. They are sold, madam.

PERSONÉ. Sold! [*With horror*] Sold! Are you mad? Who sold them? Why were they sold?

MARIE. Monseigneur the Bishop told me this afternoon while you were out to take them to Monsieur Gervais who has often admired them, and sell them for as much as I could.

PERSONÉ. But you had no right to do so without asking me.

MARIE. But, madam, Monseigneur the Bishop told me [*with awe*].

PERSONÉ. Monseigneur the Bishop is a--ahem! But, but what can he have wanted with the money?

MARIE. Pardon, madam, but I think it was for Mère Gringoire.

PERSONÉ. Mère Gringoire indeed! Mère Gringoire! What, the old witch who lives at the top of the hill, and who says she is bedridden because she is too lazy to do any work? And what did Mère Gringoire want with the money, pray?

MARIE. Madam, it was for the rent. The bailiff would not wait any longer and threatened to turn her out to-day if it were not paid, so she sent little Jean to monseigneur to ask for help and—

PERSONÉ. Oh mon Dieu! It is hopeless, hopeless. We shall have nothing left. His estate is sold, his savings have gone. His furniture, everything. Were it not for my little dot we should starve, and now my beautiful—beautiful

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MARIE. Monseigneur asked me how she was, and I told him she was feeling poorly.

PERSONÉ. You told him she was feeling poorly, did you? And so my brother is to be kept out of his bed, and without his supper because you told him she was feeling poorly. There's gratitude for you!

MARIE. Madam, the soup is boiling!

PERSONÉ. Then pour it out, fool, and don't ch-

[*Marie about to do so*] No, no. Not like that, here let me do it, and do you put the salt-cellars on the table—the silver ones.

MARIE. The silver ones, madam?

PERSONÉ. Yes, the silver ones. Are you deaf as well as stupid?

MARIE. They are sold, madam.

PERSONÉ. Sold! [*With horror*] Sold! Are you mad? Who sold them? Why were they sold?

MARIE. Monseigneur the Bishop told me this afternoon while you were out to take them to Monsieur Gervais who has often admired them, and sell them for as much as I could.

PERSONÉ. But you had no right to do so without asking me.

MARIE. But, madam, Monseigneur the Bishop told me [*with awe*].

PERSONÉ. Monseigneur the Bishop is a—ahem! But, but what can he have wanted with the money?

MARIE. Pardon, madam, but I think it was for Mère Gringoire.

PERSONÉ. Mère Gringoire indeed! Mère Gringoire! What, the old witch who lives at the top of the hill, and who says she is bedridden because she is too lazy to do any work? And what did Mère Gringoire want with the money, pray?

MARIE. Madam, it was for the rent. The bailiff would not wait any longer and threatened to turn her out to-day if it were not paid, so she sent little Jean to monseigneur to ask for help and—

PERSONÉ. Oh mon Dieu! It is hopeless, hopeless. We shall have nothing left. His estate is sold, his savings have gone. His furniture, everything. Were it not for my little dot we should starve, and now my beautiful—beautiful

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

salt-cellars. Ah, it is too much, too much. [*She breaks crying.*]

MARIE. Madam, I am sorry, if I had known—  
PERSONÉ. Sorry, and why, pray? If Monseigneur the  
Bishop chooses to sell his salt-cellars he may do so, I  
suppose. Go and wash your hands, they are disgracefully  
dirty.

MARIE. Yes, madam [*going towards R.*]

[*Enter the BISHOP, C.*]  
BISHOP. Ah, how nice and warm it is in here! It is  
sooth going out in the cold for the sake of the comfort of  
coming in. [*PERSONÉ has hastened to help him off with his  
hat, etc. MARIE has dropped a deep curtsy.*] Thank you,  
BISHOP [*looking at her*]. Why, what is the matter? You have  
been crying. Has Marie been troublesome, eh? [*Seating  
his finger at her*] Ah!

PERSONÉ. No, it wasn't Marie—but, but—

BISHOP. Well, well, you shall tell me presently. Marie,  
my child, run home now, your mother is better, I have  
prayed with her, and the doctor has been. Run home!  
[*MARIE putting on cloak and going*] And, Marie, let your-  
self in quietly in case your mother is asleep.

MARIE. Oh, thanks, thanks, monseigneur.  
[*She goes to door C., as it opens the snow drives in.*]

BISHOP. Here, Marie, take my comforter, it will keep you  
warm. It is very cold to-night.

MARIE. Oh, no, monseigneur [*shamefacedly*]!

PERSONÉ. What nonsense, brother, she is young, she won't  
hurt.

BISHOP. Ah, Personé, you have not been out, you don't  
know how cold it has become. Here, Marie, let me put it  
on for you. [*Does so.*] There! Run along, little one.  
[*Exit MARIE, C.*]

PERSONÉ. Brother, I have no patience with you. There,

## THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

sit down and take your soup, it has been waiting ever so long. And if it is spoilt it serves you right.

BISHOP. It smells delicious.

PERSONA. I'm sure Marie's mother is not so ill that you need have stayed out on such a night as this. I believe those people *pretend* to be ill just to have the Bishop call on them. They have no thought of the Bishop!

BISHOP. It is kind of them to want to see me

PERSONA. Well for my part I believe that charity begins at home.

BISHOP. And so you make me this delicious soup. You are very good to me, sister.

PERSONA. Good to you, yes! I should think so. I should like to know where you would be without me to look after you. The dupe of every idle scamp or lying old woman in the parish.

BISHOP. If people lie to me they are poorer, not I.

PERSONA. But it is ridiculous, you will soon have nothing left. You give away everything, everything!!!

BISHOP. My dear, there is so much suffering in the world, and I can do so little (*sighs*), so very little.

PERSONA. Suffering, yes, but you never think of the suffering you cause to those who love you best, the suffering you cause to me.

BISHOP (*rising*). You, sister dear? Have I hurt you? Ah, I remember you had been crying. Was it my fault? I didn't mean to hurt you. I am sorry

PERSONA. Sorry. Yes. Sorry won't mend it. Humph! Oh, do go on eating your soup before it gets cold.

BISHOP. Very well, dear. (*Sits.*) But tell me—

PERSONA. You are like a child, I can't trust you out of my sight. No sooner is my back turned than you get that little minx Marie to sell the silver salt-cellars.

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

**BISHOP.** Ah, yes, the salt-cellars. It is a pity. You, you were proud of them!

**PERSONS.** Proud of them, why they have been in our family for years.

**BISHOP.** Yes, it is a pity, they were beautiful, but still, dear, one can eat salt out of china just as well.

**PERSONS.** Yes, or treat off the floor, I suppose. Oh, it's coming to that. And as for that old wretch Mère Gringuire, I wonder she had the audacity to send here again. The last time I saw her I gave her such a talking to that it ought to have had some effect.

**BISHOP.** Yes! I offered to take her in here for a day or two, but she seemed to think it might distress you.

**PERSONS.** Distress me!!!

**BISHOP.** And the bailiff, who is a very just man, would not wait longer for the rent, so—so—you see I had to pay it.

**PERSONS.** You had to pay it. *[Gesture of comic despair.]*

**BISHOP.** Yes, and you see I had no money so I had to dispose of the salt-cellars. It was fortunate I had them, wasn't it? *[Smiling.]* But I'm sorry I have grieved you.

**PERSONS.** Oh, go on! go on! you are incorrigible. You'll sell your candlesticks next.

**BISHOP.** *[With real concern.]* No, no, sister, not my candlesticks.

**PERSONS.** Oh! Why not? They would pay somebody's rent, I suppose.

**BISHOP.** Ah, you are good, sister, to think of that, but, but I don't want to sell them. You see, dear, my mother gave them to me on—on her deathbed just after you were born, and—and she asked me to keep them in remembrance of her, so I would like to keep them, but perhaps it is a sin to set such store by them!

**PERSONS.** Brother, brother, you will break my heart

## THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

(*with tears in her voice*). There! don't say anything more. Kiss me and give me your blessing. I'm going to bed. [*They kiss.*]

[BISHOP *making sign of the Cross and murmuring blessing.*]

[PERSONÉ *locks cupboard door and turns to go.*]

PERSONÉ. Don't sit up too long and tire your eyes.

BISHOP. No, dear! Good night! [PERSONÉ *exits R.*]

BISHOP [*comes to table and opens a book, then looks up at the candlesticks*]. They would pay somebody's rent. It was kind of her to think of that.

[*He stirs the fire, trims the lamp, arranges some books and papers, sits down, is restless, shivers slightly, clock outside strikes twelve, and he settles to read. Mune during this. Enter the CONVICT stealthily, he has a long knife and seizes the bishop from behind.*]

CONVICT. If you call out you are a dead man!

BISHOP. But, my friend, as you see, I am reading. Why should I call out? Can I help you in any way?

CONVICT [*hoarsely*]. I want food. I'm starving. I haven't eaten anything for three days. Give me food quickly, quickly, curse you.

BISHOP [*eagerly*]. But certainly, my son, you shall have food. I will ask my sister for the keys of the cupboard.

[*Rising.*]

CONVICT. Sit down!!! [*The bishop sits, smiling.*] None of that, my friend! I'm too old a bird to be caught with chaff. You would ask your sister for the keys, would you? A likely story! You would rouse the house too. Eh! Ha! ha! A good joke truly. Come, where is the food. I want no keys. I have a wolf inside me tearing at my entrails, tearing me; quick, tell me where the food is.



# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

BISHOP *[aside]*. I wish Personé would not lock the cupboard. *[Aloud]* Come, my friend, you have nothing to fear. My sister and I are alone here.

CONVICT. How do I know that?

BISHOP. Why I have just told you.

*[CONVICT looks long at the BISHOP.]*

CONVICT. Humph! I'll risk it *[BISHOP, going to door R.]*  
But mind! Play me false and as sure as there are devils  
in hell I'll drive my knife through your heart. I have  
nothing to lose.

BISHOP. You have your soul to lose, my son, it is of more  
value than my heart *[At door R. calling]* Personé!  
Personé!

*[The CONVICT stands behind him with his knife ready.]*

PERSONÉ *[within]*. Yes, brother

BISHOP. Here is a poor traveller who is hungry. If you  
are not undressed will you come and open the cupboard  
and I will give him some supper.

PERSONÉ *[within]*. What, at this time of night? A pretty  
business truly. Are we to have no sleep now, but to be at  
the beck and call of every ne'er-do-well who happens to  
pass?

BISHOP. But, Personé, the traveller is hungry.

PERSONÉ. Oh, very well, I am coming. *[PERSONÉ enters  
R. Sees the knife in the convict's hand.]* *[Frightened]*  
Brother, what is he doing with that knife?

BISHOP. The knife, oh, well, you see, dear, perhaps he  
may have thought that I—I had sold ours. *[Laughs gently.]*

PERSONÉ. Brother, I am frightened. He glares at us like  
a wild beast *[aside to him]*.

CONVICT. Hurry, I tell you. Give me food or I'll stick  
my knife in you both and help myself.

BISHOP. Give me the keys, Personé, *[she gives them to  
him]* and now, dear, you may go to bed.

## THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

[PERSONÉ going. *The CONVICT springs in front of her.*

CONVICT. Stop! Neither of you leave this room till I do.

[*She looks at the BISHOP.*

BISHOP. Personé, will you favour this gentleman with your company at supper? He evidently desires it.

PERSONÉ. Very well, brother.

[*She sits down at table staring at the two.*

BISHOP. Here is some cold pie and a bottle of wine and some bread.

CONVICT. Put them on the table, and stand below it so that I can see you.

[*BISHOP does so and opens drawer in table, taking out knife and fork, looking at the knife in convict's hand.*

CONVICT. My knife is sharp. [*He runs his finger along the edge and looks at them meaningly.*] And as for forks [*taking it up*] taught steel. [*He throws it away.*] We don't use forks in prison.

PERSONÉ. Prison?

CONVICT [*cutting off an enormous slice, which he tears with his fingers like an animal, then starts*]. What was that? [*He looks at the door.*] Why the devil do you leave the window unshuttered and the door unbarred so that anyone can come in [*shutting them*]?!

BISHOP. That is why they are left open.

CONVICT. Well, they are shut now!

BISHOP [*laughs*]. For the first time in thirty years.

[*CONVICT eats voraciously and throws a bone on the floor.*

PERSONÉ. Oh, my nice clean floor!

[*BISHOP picks up the bone and puts it on plate.*

CONVICT. You're not afraid of thieves?

BISHOP. I am sorry for them.

CONVICT. Sorry for them. Ha! ha! ha! [*Drinks from*

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

*title.*] That's a good one. Sorry for them. Ha! ha! ha!

*Drinks.*] [Suddenly] What the devil are you?

BISHOP. I am a bishop.

CONVICT. Ha! ha! ha! A bishop. Holy Virgin, a bishop.

Well I'm damned!

BISHOP. I hope you may escape that, my son. Persomé,

you may leave us, this gentleman will excuse you.

PERSOMÉ. Leave you with—

BISHOP. Please! My friend and I can talk more—freely

then.

O *[By this time, owing to his starving condition, the wine has affected the convict.*

CONVICT. What's that? Leave us. Yes, yes, leave us.

Good night. I want to talk to the Bishop. The Bishop

Ha! ha!

*[Laughs as he drinks and coughs.*

BISHOP. Good night, Persomé

*[He holds the door open and she goes out R, holding in her skirts as she passes the convict.*

CONVICT *[chuckling to himself]* The Bishop. Ha! ha!

Well I'm— *[Suddenly very loudly]* D'you know what I

am?

BISHOP. I think one who has suffered much.

CONVICT. Suffered *[puzzled]*, suffered? My God, yes.

*[Drinks.]* But that's a long time ago. Ha! ha! That

was when I was a man, now I'm not a man; now I'm a

number: number 15729, and I've lived in hell for ten years

BISHOP. Tell me about it—about hell.

CONVICT. Why? *[Suspiciously]* Do you want to tell the

police—to set them on my track?

BISHOP. No! I will not tell the police.

CONVICT *[looks at him earnestly]*. I believe you *[scratching his head]*, but damn me if I know why.

BISHOP *[laying his hand on the convict's arm]*. Tell me

about the time—the time before you went to—hell.

## THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

CONVICT. It's so long ago I forgot, but I had a little cottage, there were vines growing on it [*dreamily*], they looked pretty with the evening sun on them and, and—there was a woman—she was [*thinking hard*—she must have been my wife—yes. [*Suddenly and very rapidly*] Yes, I remember! she was ill, we had no food, I could get no work, it was a bad year, and my wife, my Jeanette, was ill, dying, [*pause*] so I stole to buy her food. [*Long pause. The bishop gently pats his hand.*] They caught me. I pleaded to them, I told them why I stole, but they laughed at me, and I was sentenced to ten years in the prison hulks, [*pause*] ten years in hell. The night I was sentenced the gaoler told me—told me Jeanette was dead. [*Sobs, with fury*] Ah, damn them, damn them. God curse them all.

*[He sinks on the table sobbing.]*

BISHOP. Now tell me about the prison-ship, about hell.

CONVICT. Tell you about it? Look here, I was a man once. I'm a beast now, and they made me what I am. They chained me up like a wild animal, they lashed me like a hound. I fed on filth, I was covered with vermin, I slept on boards and I complained. Then they lashed me again. For ten years, ten years. Oh God! They took away my name, they took away my soul, and they gave me a devil in its place. But one day they were careless, one day they forgot to chain up their wild beast, and he escaped. He was free. That was six weeks ago. I was free, free to starve.

BISHOP. To starve?

CONVICT. Yes, to starve. They feed you in hell, but when you escape from it you starve. They were hunting me everywhere and I had no passport, no name. So I stole again, I stole these rags, I stole my food daily, I slept in the woods, in barns, anywhere. I dare not ask for work, I dare not go into a town to beg, so I stole, and they have made

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

me what I am, they have made me a thief. I have stolen from them all.

*[Empties the bottle and throws it into the fire, then smashes it.]*

BISHOP. My son, you have suffered much, but I have hope for all.

CONVICT. Hope! Hope! Ha! ha! ha! *[Laughs.]*

BISHOP. You have walked far, you are tired. Lie down and sleep on the couch there, and I will get you some more wine.

CONVICT. And if anyone comes?

BISHOP. No one will come, but if they do, say I am your friend.

CONVICT. Your friend *[puzzled]*?

BISHOP. They will not molest the Bishop's friend.

CONVICT. The Bishop's friend.

*[Scratching his head, utterly puzzled.]*

BISHOP. I will get the coverings.

CONVICT *[looks after him, scratches his head]*. The Bishop's friend! *[He goes to fire to warm himself and notices the candlesticks. He looks round to see if he is alone, then puts them down, weighing them.]* Silver, by God, and a great prize! What a prize!

*[He hears the bishop coming, and in his haste he puts one candlestick on the table.]*

*[Enter the bishop.]*

BISHOP *[sees what is going on, but goes to the settle up and covers it]*. Ah, you are admiring my candlesticks, are you? I am proud of them. They were a gift from my mother. A little too handsome for this poor cottage perhaps, but they have to remind me of her. Your bed is ready. Now lie down now!

CONVICT. Yes, yes, I'll lie down now. *[Puzzled]* But why here, why the devil are you—kind to me. *[Suspicious]* What do you want? Eh?

## THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

BISHOP. I want you to have a good sleep, my friend.

CONVICT. I believe you want to convert me; save my soul, don't you call it? Well it's no good, see? I don't want any damned religion, and as for the Church, bah! I hate the Church.

BISHOP. That is a pity, my son, as the Church does not hate you.

CONVICT. You are going to try to convert me. Oh, ha! ha! that's a good idea. Ha! ha! ha! No, no, Monseigneur the Bishop. I don't want any of your Faith, Hope, and Charity, see? So anything you do for me you're doing to the devil, understand [*defiantly*]?

BISHOP. One must do a great deal for the devil, in order to do a little for God.

CONVICT [*angrily*]. I don't want any damned religion, I tell you.

BISHOP. Won't you lie down now, it is late?

CONVICT [*grumbling*]. Well all right, but I won't be preached at, I—I—— [*On couch*] You're sure no one will come?

BISHOP. I don't think they will, but if they do—you yourself have locked the door.

CONVICT. Humph! I wonder if it's safe. [*He goes to the door and tries it, then turns and sees the BISHOP holding the covering, annoyed.*] Here! you go to bed. I'll cover myself. [*The BISHOP hesitates.*] Go on, I tell you.

BISHOP. Good night, my son. [*Exit L.*]

[CONVICT waits till he is off, then tries the BISHOP's door.]

CONVICT. No lock of course. Curse it. [*Looks round and sees the candlesticks again.*] Humph! I'll have another look at them. [*He takes them up and toys with them.*] Worth hundreds I'll warrant. If I had these turned into money they'd start me fair. Humph! The old boy's fond of them too, said his mother gave him them. His

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

mother, yes. They didn't think of my mother when they sent me to hell. He was kind to me too—but what's a bishop for except to be kind to you? Here, cheer up, my hearty, you're getting soft. God! wouldn't my chain-mates laugh to see 15729 hesitating about collaring the plunder because he felt good. Good! Ha! ha! Oh my God! Good! Ha! ha! 15729 getting soft. That's a good one. Ha! ha! No, I'll take his candlesticks and go, if I stay here he'll preach at me in the morning and I'll get soft. Damn him and his preaching too. Here goes!

C. *[He takes the candlesticks, stores them in his coat, and cautiously exits L. C. As he does so the door slams.*

PERSONS *[without]* Who's there? Who's there, I say! Am I to get no sleep to-night? Who's there, I say! *[Enter R. PERSONS.]* I'm sure I heard the door shut. *[Looking round]* No one here? *[Knocks at the minor's door L. Sees the candlesticks have gone.]* The candlesticks, the candlesticks. They are gone. Brother, brother, come out. Fire, murder, thieves! *[Enter minor, L.]*

MINOR. What is it, dear, what is it? What is the matter?

PERSONS. He has gone. The man with the hungry eyes has gone, and he has taken your candlesticks.

MINOR. Not my candlesticks, sister, surely not those. *[He looks and sighs.]* Ah that is hard, very hard, I, I—He might have left me those. They were all I had.

*[Almost breaking down.]*

PERSONS. Well, but go and inform the police. He can't have gone far. They will soon catch him, and you'll get the candlesticks back again. You don't deserve them, though, leaving them about with a man like that in the house.

MINOR. You are right, PERSONS. It was my fault. I led him into temptation.

## THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

PERSONÉ. Oh, nonsense! Led him into temptation indeed! The man is a thief, a common scoundrelly thief. I knew it the moment I saw him. Go and inform the police or I will. *[Going, but he stops her.]*

BISHOP. And have him sent back to prison *[very softly]*, sent back to hell! No, Personé. It is a just punishment for me; I set too great store by them. It was a sin. My punishment is just, but oh God, it is hard, it is very hard.

*[He buries his head in his hands.]*

PERSONÉ. No, brother, you are wrong. If you won't tell the police I will. I will not stand by and see you robbed. I know you are my brother and my bishop and the best man in all France, but you are a fool, I tell you, a child, and I will not have your goodness abused. I shall go and inform the police *[going]*.

BISHOP. Stop, Personé. The candlesticks were mine, they are *his* now. It is better so. He has more need of them than I. My mother would have wished it so had she been here.

PERSONÉ. But—— *[Great knocking without.]*

SERGEANT *[without]*. Monseigneur, monseigneur, we have something for you, may we enter?

BISHOP. Enter, my son.

*[Enter SERGEANT and three GENDARMES with CONVICT bound. The SERGEANT carries the candlesticks.]*

PERSONÉ. Ah so they have caught you, villain, have they?

SERGEANT. Yes, madam, we found this scoundrel slinking along the road, and as he wouldn't give any account of himself we arrested him on suspicion. Holy Virgin, isn't he strong and didn't he struggle? While we were securing him these candlesticks fell out of his pockets. *[PERSONÉ seizes them, goes to table, and brushes them with her apron lovingly.]* I remembered the candlesticks of Monseigneur



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

the Bishop, so we brought him here that you might identify them and then we'll lock him up.

[*The BISHOP and the CONVICT have been looking at each other. The CONVICT with dogged defiance.*]

BISHOP. But, but I don't understand, this gentleman is my very good friend.

SERGEANT. Your *friend*, monseigneur!! Holy Virgin! Well!!!

BISHOP. Yes, my friend, he did me the honour to sup with me to-night and I—I have given him the candlesticks.

SERGEANT [*incredulously*]. You gave *him*, *him* your candlesticks? Holy Virgin!

BISHOP [*severely*]. Remember, my son, that she is holy.

SERGEANT [*saluting*]. Pardon, monseigneur.

BISHOP. And now I think you may let your prisoner go.

SERGEANT. But he won't show me his papers, he won't tell me who he is.

BISHOP. I have told you he is my friend.

SERGEANT. Yes, that's all very well, but——

BISHOP. He is your Bishop's friend, surely that is enough.

SERGEANT. Well, but——

BISHOP. Surely?

[*A pause. The SERGEANT and the BISHOP look at each other.*]

SERGEANT. I—I—— Humph! [*To his men*] Loose the prisoner. [*They do so.*] Right about turn, quick march!

[*Exit SERGEANT and GENDARMES. A long pause.*]

CONVICT [*very slowly, as if in a dream*]. You told them you had given me the candlesticks, given me them. By God!

PERSONA [*shaking her fist at him and hugging the candlesticks to her breast*]. Oh, you scoundrel, you pitiful scoundrel, you come here and are fed, and warmed, and—and you thieve; steal from your benefactor. Oh, you blackguard.

## THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS.

BISHOP. Persomé, you are overwrought. Go to your room.

PERSONÉ. What, and leave you with him to be cheated again, perhaps murdered. No, I will not.

BISHOP [*with slight severity*]. Persomé, leave us, I wish it.

[*She looks hard at him, then turns towards her door.*]

PERSONÉ. Well, if I must go at least I'll take the candlesticks with me.

BISHOP [*more severely*]. Persomé, place the candlesticks on that table and leave us.

PERSONÉ [*defiantly*]. I will not!

BISHOP [*loudly and with great severity*]. I, your bishop, command it.

[PERSONÉ does so with great reluctance and exits R.]

CONVICT [*shamefacedly*]. Monseigneur, I'm glad I didn't get away with them, curse me, I am. I'm glad.

BISHOP. Now won't you sleep here? See, your bed is ready.

CONVICT. No! [*Looking at the candlesticks*] No! no! I daren't, I daren't—besides I must go on, I must get to Paris, it is big, and I—I can be lost there, they won't find me there and I must travel at night, do you understand?

BISHOP. I see—you must travel by night.

CONVICT. I—I—didn't believe there was any good in the world—one doesn't when one has been in hell, but somehow I—I—know you're good and, and it's a queer thing to ask but—but could you, would you bless me before I go—I—I think it would help me. I—

[*Hangs his head very shamefacedly.*]

[BISHOP makes sign of the Cross and murmurs blessing.]

CONVICT [*tries to speak, but a sob almost chokes him*]. Good night.

[*He hurries towards the door.*]

BISHOP. Stay, my son, you have forgotten your property [*giving him the candlesticks*]

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

CONVICT. You mean me—you want me to take them? BISHOP. Please, they may help you. [*The convict takes the candlesticks in absolute amazement.*] And, my son, there is a path through the woods at the back of this cottage which leads to Paris, it is a very lonely path, and I have noticed that my good friends the gendarmes do not like lonely paths at night. It is curious.

CONVICT. Ah, thanks, thanks, monseigneur. I—I— [*He sobs.*] Ah! I'm a fool, a child to cry, but somehow you have made me feel that—that it is just as if something had come into me—as if I were a man again and not a wild beast.

[*The door at back is open, and the convict is standing in it.*]

BISHOP [*putting his hand on his shoulder*]. Always remember, my son, that this poor body is the Temple of the Living God.

CONVICT [*with great awe*]. The Temple of the Living God. I'll remember. [*Frit L. C.*]

[*The bishop closes the door and goes quietly to the prie dieu in the window R, he sinks on his knees and bows his head in prayer.*]

SLOW CURTAIN

# BETWEEN THE SOUP AND THE SAVOURY

BY GIETREUDE JENNINGS

7

## CHARACTERS

MARIA, *the cook*

ADA, *the parlourmaid*

EMILY, *the kitchenmaid*

*The scene represents a kitchen.*

This play was produced on October 19, 1910, at the Playhouse, London, by Mr Cyril Maude, with the following cast:

<i>Maria</i>	.	.	MARGARET MURRAY
<i>Ada</i>	.	.	MAUDE BUCHANAN
<i>Emily</i>	.	.	EYNEL ROSS

Miss GERTRUDE JENNINGS is without rival in popularity of her one-act plays. The simplicity of her craftsmanship commends her, especially to amateur actors whose stage equipment is meagre, while her skill in writing character-parts for women and her shrewd and often caustic comment on everyday occurrences, contribute to her popularity. The Prince of Wales (following royal precedent long ago when James I's daughter Elizabeth appeared at Whitehall in "Tethys's Festival" on shipboard in her one-act play "The Baited Door.")

"Waiting for the Bus," "Five Birds in a Bush" and "At the Ribbon Counter" are typical of Miss Jennings's ability to place a handful of people in a more or less humorous predicament and to show their reactions to one another. Of her latest, "The Young Person in Pink" is the best I have

## BETWEEN THE SOUP AND THE SAVOURY<sup>1</sup>

*The scene is a cheerful, bright kitchen, and the time the beginning of dinner—upstairs.*

EMILY, a meek, pathetic little kitchenmaid, is at the range; COOK, a handsome, buxom woman, is washing parsley.

COOK. Did I put any salt in the soup, Hemuly?

EMILY. Yui, Cook.

COOK. Saw me do it, did you?

EMILY. Yui, Cook.

COOK. She turns back this morning when I thought I'd got rid of her and sez, "Cook," she sez, "your master tells me you don't know the use of salt." Those were her very words.

EMILY. And what did you say?

COOK. Oh, I never loses my temper, however much I'm vexed, so I just answered quiet like but firm: "Well, mum," I sez, "it's a good thing he knows *something* which I don't." You should 'ave seen 'er look.

EMILY. I do!

COOK. Oh, I don't believe in flying out at people. Not that I'd let myself be put upon neither. My mother that lives in Putney brought me up most careful in that respect.

<sup>1</sup> Applications regarding amateur performances of this play should be addressed to Messrs Samuel French, Ltd., 25 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C. 2, or 25 West 45th Street, New York.

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

"Marie," she sez, "you remember who you are and oth will do the same. That's the way."

EMILY. I should like to see anyone down you.

COOK. Neither wouldn't I. I'm just the same with Pollard. "Arthur," I sez, "if you wants to spend afternoon with me on Sunday we go to Kew or nowher Just like that—quite pleasant.

EMILY. And 'e 'as ter gol

COOK. Should think so! Not that we've bin yet, but all the same principle (ADA, a smart, pretty girl with a *la macquer* and rather a strident voice, enters, carrying a with soup-plates), so just you 'old to that, Emily, and I make yourself cheap with no young man.

ADA. Don't you waste time advising her what to Marie. Can you see Emily with a young man? much!

COOK. Soup all right?

ADA. Not enough salt.

COOK. 'Oo says so?

ADA. 'She' did. Open like. Master tastes it, down his spoon, and raises his eyebrows, so—'she' 's up and says quiet like, "I *never* mentioned it." A says, "Not with much effect."

COOK. Ho, indeed! Was that all?

ADA. Yes. I suppose he didn't like to use language in front of Miss Angela's fiancée

EMILY (timidly). 'Oo is Mr Forster looking, miss?

ADA (looking her up and down scornfully). Now then up with those plates! (EMILY does so) Rose is alone when there's company [3]

EMILY. Ada's a bit short with me sometimes.

COOK. Well, it's none of your business asking aft gentry. What's it to you how Mr Forster is? A pertainses ready!

(EMILY tries them with

## BETWEEN THE SOUP AND 'THE SAVOURY

EMILY. Just on. I only asked after Mr Forbes bekos he's going ter marry Miss Angela.

COOK [*consulting a cookery book*]. You put enough salt in the soup next time, and don't be filling your head with romances.

EMILY. I only——

COOK. There, that's enough. Where's Rose gone to-night?

EMILY. Mr Fuller is a-taking of her ter the Exhibition.

COOK. Has she asked 'her' for late?

EMILY. Naow.

COOK. Lor'l! Took the key, 'as she?

EMILY. Naow.

COOK. There now, that beats me. You'll have ter sit up, and mind you're quiet opening the door. That lower 'inge still squeaks. She said ter me only Saturday, " 'No one out after ten' is my rule, as you know, Cook, and please remind the others"—which I never did. However, it's a poor heart that never rejoices. Pick up that spoon. You'll be wanting it in a minute, and then it will be minus.

[*EMILY picks up the spoon.*]

EMILY. I wish I had somebody ter walk out with.

COOK. You walk out with them pertatoes if they're done.

[*Enter ADA, with a tray: she looks in a hand-glass and puts her cap straight. EMILY is now dishing up the potatoes.*]

ADA. Lively lot in there, I must say. Master looks like old Nick.

COOK. Per'aps he's made a fool of himself on the Stock Exchange, as per usual.

ADA. Oh, I desay. He generally works it off on the family.

EMILY. Ain't Miss Angela in her usual, Miss Makepeace?

ADA [*ignoring her*]. Mr Furber, he's hardly spoke, and it's



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

my belief there's something up between him and Miss Angela, for he hasn't pressed her foot under the table once, nor eaten her bread, which is his custom, and more than that, when master was arguing with 'her' over the electric light bill I heard Miss Angela say quite plain, "If you don't believe me there's no more to be said!" Just like that.

EMILY. How beautiful!

ADA [*sharply*]. What are you a-hanging round listening for? Be off!

◀ [EMILY turns away, gets fork and exits to left.]

COOK. And what did Mr Forbes say?

ADA. Couldn't quite catch the beginning, as master he bellows so, but it was something like—"If you'd eated for them it couldn't have happened."

COOK. 'Them'! That's queer! If it had been 'me,' I'd have understood. [The bell from the dining-room rings.]

ADA. Well, they 'ave gobbled and no mistake. You did say no *more*!

[EMILY re-enters.]

COOK. Yes. Only roast fowls. Emily—

EMILY. Yes, mum, they're on the list.

ADA. Fity you're such an imago to look at. I'd like a little extra help upstairs. Come along with that bread sauce! [EMILY brings it.] Hurry up! [Between them they upset the sauce.] There, you've dropped it!

EMILY. I didn't!

ADA. Don't argue. Lucky it's fallen on the table. Spoon it up. What the eye don't see the heart don't grieve over. [The bell rings again.] Oh, keep it up! [She runs.]

EMILY. You know I didn't drop it, Cook. She did it 'erself.

COOK. Emily, you forget yourself! Put them dabs under the tip and don't let me hear no nonsense. What next, I wonder!

## BETWEEN THE SOUP AND THE SAVOURY

EMILY. I'm sorry, Cook.

*[She takes the soup-plates away to the sink.*

COOK *[breaking eggs and beating them in bowl]*. Well, so long as you sees you're wrong. A-critikizing of Miss Malepeace, indeed!

EMILY. I know it were taking a liberty, Cook. I forget myself.

COOK. I should think so.

EMILY. It comes over me sometimes just like a sort of spasm, ter think I'm the same as others.

COOK. Don't you encourage them fancies, Emily. They're morbid, that's what they are.

EMILY. What's morbid, Cook?

COOK *[adding milk and sugar]*. Morbid! Why, you ought to know that. It's like—— You ought ter be ashamed of yourself fer asking. Where's the vanilla?

EMILY. 'Ere it is! *[Takes it from table, and gives it to cook]*. I can't 'elp thinking sometimes when I'm a-washing up what it 'ud be like ter be a young lady wot had a young man ter walk out with.

COOK. Well, you won't never have one, Emily. You haven't the looks—not unless it was a blind man or a widower with children wot needed managing. You needn't look at me so hot. I'm only telling you for your good.

*[Pours soufflé from the bowl into a dish, and puts it into the oven.]*

EMILY. Perhaps as I can't 'ave no young man you might learn me ter be a real cook some day.

COOK. Not I. You're too 'eavy-'anded. No, there's some people meant ter be kitchenmaids, and you're one of 'em.

*[ADA enters with the fish-plates.]*

ADA. Master's in a stew, I can tell you. Says the bread sauce tastes of paraffin. Give us that chair.

*[EMILY gets a chair and ADA sits down.]*

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

COOK. Lot'! There was a drop of paraffin on the table now you mention it.

ADA. 'She' asked me why there was paraffin in the bread sauce, under her breath, when I was passing the greens. Just ter shame her I spoke out loud—like this—"I couldn't say, mum." That finished her.

COOK. She never gets the better of you.

ADA. Should 'ope not. Miss Angela and Mr Forbes are going on like anything.

COOK. Making up to each other?

ADA. Nor them. I should say it's about broken off by now.

EMILY [*creeping down to ADA, in an agitated voice*]. Oh, naouw, Miss Makepeace. My heart bleeds ter 'ear it. It can't be true.

ADA. Hulloo, what's all this? Well, you 'ave got some sauce! Upon my word!

COOK. Don't mind 'et, Ada. Her head's turned reading novelettes. She's all on love and marriage, and wishes she 'ad a young man.

ADA. A young man? Het! Oh, don't, Cook, you'll be the death of me. [*She finishes her sentence between shrill laughs.*] Emily with a young man! Oh, I shall split myself!

COOK. I told her she was morbid. [*Also laughing.*]

ADA. I should say so! [*Still laughing*] Look at her! What sort of young man will you have, Emily? Oh, dear! There's the grocer's boy—he isn't more than half wanting. Would he do? Or Buggins that was in the motor accident—he's still got some face left—you'd suit him nicely! [*By now she and cook are quite hysterical. The bell rings. There is a sudden silence.*] Now, they can't have got through that, not if they ate with both hands.

COOK. It's only for vegetables, I expect.

## BETWEEN THE SOUP AND THE SAVOURY

[ADA snorts, takes up her tray and goes out.  
[COOK brings ingredients and begins making the  
savoury.

COOK. Not but what they 'ands the vegetables themselves when Rose is out, don't they?

[There is a pause. EMILY is too much hurt to answer.

COOK. Now then, Emily, what's the matter with you? You're never sulking over what's bin said, are you? Well, you are a caution, and no mistake! Taking offence just bekos we were having a bit of fun! Me and Ada can't clip your looks.

EMILY. It ain't that, Cook.

COOK. Well, what is it, then?

EMILY. You won't believe me if I tell yer.

COOK. You think I'm a regular Roman! Out with it! I'll believe yer if I can.

EMILY. Well, Cook, I 'ave got a young man, so there!

COOK. Oh, go on. You're romancing.

EMILY. I'm not, neither. I've got a real young man. He's not Buggina, nor 'e ain't the grocer's boy. He's a regular idol.

COOK. 'Ere, Emily, if you think I'm going ter swallow your capers you're extremely mistook. You do your work and don't tell me none of your embroideries.

EMILY. But, Cook—

COOK. That's enough!

[ADA returns.

ADA. Marie!

COOK. Well?

ADA. I'll ask you ter give a guess as to Master's latest.

COOK [bored]. Oh, lor! Found a bit of grit in the gravy?

ADA. Nol

COOK. Chickens taste of paper?

ADA. No.

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

ADA [*winking at COOK*]. Well, seeing's believing, so I'm told.

COOK. Yes, let's 'ave a look at 'Aroid, that's all.

EMILY. So you shall, but he's away just now.

ADA. Oh, I dare say. He'll stop there, too.

COOK. Per'aps you've got a letter of 'is, Emily?

ADA. Yes. Per'aps you can show us something sweet in writing.

EMILY. Well, per'aps I can.

ADA. Let's see you do it, then.

EMILY. If I fetch you one, will you promise not to snatch it?

COOK. Certainly.

EMILY. I'll read you one, then.

ADA. That's right.

[*EMILY goes off. The two other servants look at each other.*]

ADA [*to COOK*]. She's going to make it all up.

COOK. That's it!

[*EMILY returns with a little packet made of dirty newspaper.*]

COOK. Where 'ave yer 'ad it?

EMILY. In the boot-box, wrapped up.

ADA. Well, I never did! Now then, read it out.

EMILY. You won't believe me without!

ADA. Not likely!

[*She and COOK settle themselves in chairs to listen. EMILY still hesitates. At last she unfolds the newspaper, and, extracting a letter, reads. The servants giggle at first, but gradually become impressed.*]

EMILY [*reading*]. "Dearest little woman. It seems years since I saw you last, and the stupid days never will go by, and bring us to Saturday——"

## BETWEEN THE SOUP AND THE SAVOURY

COOK. Saturday! Why, you 'aven't 'ad Saturday out since I've bin 'ere!

EMILY [*hesitating*]. Naow, but I—I used ter meet 'im at the corner when you sent me out ter post the letters.

COOK. Mean ter say he hung about on the chance of that? Why——

ADA. Hush, Marie! Go on, Emily.

EMILY [*reading*]. "I think abart you all day long, when I ought ter be doing my work——"

COOK. He'll get the sack, see if he don't.

EMILY. "And all the while old Grub thinks I'm answerin' letters I'm drawing your dear little face on the blotting-paper——"

ADA. Dear—little—face! Yours!

EMILY. "I wain't much of a feller before I knew you, dearest of all, but you've made me ashamed of myself, and I mean to do all I can to be more worthy of you and your love."

ADA. Well, I never.

EMILY. "I think per'aps a good woman never really understands 'ow much her ex—exis—tence means ter the man 'oo loves her. It reminds 'im of all the things 'e 'eard and saw when 'e was a little feller, and the world was so wonderful—flowers and sunsets, and the sound of 'is mother's voice teaching 'im 'is prayers. 'E didn't think abart it all at the time, but when years 'ave gorn by 'e begins to remember and ter know that 'e was 'appy then. And this 'appiness you bring back to me, my darling, because I love you and because you are so far better than I shall ever be. Always, always yours, 'Arold."

*[There is a long pause. They are all rather subdued, EMILY is almost crying. She replaces the letter in the packet.]*

ADA. She hasn't made that up.

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

COOK. I must say it really is a beautiful letter.

ADA. I've 'eard worse.

COOK [*reflectively*]. I can't quite make out 'ow he  
that in you, Emily.

ADA. No, still there's no doubt he has a very  
manly way of expressing his feelings, be they what  
may.

COOK. Quite 'andsome I call it. I congratulate  
Emily. Not that I believe it'll ever come to anything.

EMILY. Oh, don't you think so, Cook?

COOK. No, I don't. What do you say, Ada?

ADA. Don't sound like it. All that poetry is sur-  
They come straight ter the point if they mean anything.  
Still, even ter walk out with, he's very superior. That's  
what—— [*The bell again.*] Oh, lor'! there's the  
bell! I'll 'ear more when I come down. Give  
sweet, Emily.

COOK. Good 'evins! if I ain't forgot about the soup.

[*COOK AND EMILY RUSH TO THE*

COOK. This is a day of misfortune! Drat me, gone  
here while my dinner's getting spoiled!

[*As they bustle about the bell rings*

COOK. Give it 'ere, Emily. 'Urry up! Why, it's  
flat, and black as coal. Can't be helped. Wasn't  
fault. There, pour the cream over it. [*EMILY DIPS*

ADA. Pretty looking sight, that is! If it hadn't been  
Emily——

COOK. No, no, it ain't the girl's fault. There!  
'ope they won't notice. [*The bell rings.*] Get on, Ada!

ADA. That's right, ring away. [*She*

EMILY. I'm very sorry, Cook!

COOK. Don't you fret. Be ready ter take the fowl  
the lift. I do call it mean of 'her' not to let us shoo  
'em up. We've had that salt beef for three days. 'Owe

## BETWEEN THE SOUP AND THE SAVOURY

we've got that choice little bit of savoury to-night. And I've made an extra lot, so's there'll be enough for every one. Now tell us more about your young man, Emily. What made you used to pretend you 'adn't got one?

EMILY [*awkwardly*]. I dunno, Cook.

COOK. Oh, come, you must 'ave some reason.

EMILY. Well, you see, it's all been 'ushed up bekos 'is father objects ter the match.

COOK. Does he, now? Well, I call that a shame. I don't say you're a beauty, Emily, but looks ain't everything. What does he do fer a living—Arold, I mean?

EMILY [*hesitating*]. Oh, he's in the carpentering.

COOK. Oh! Then why is he writing all day long, as he said in the letter?

EMILY [*embarrassed*]. He—he 'as ter take measures and keep them in a book.

COOK. Funny. I never 'eard tell of any such thing. There's the lift.

[*EMILY fetches the dish of fowls from the lift outside.*

*COOK inspects the carcasses disparagingly.*

COOK. They've made those fowls look pretty miserable. I wonder if 'she' 'd miss that wing if—— Put 'em in the larder.

[*EMILY does so.*

COOK. You might tell us a bit more while we're waiting.

EMILY. More?

COOK. Yes. Seems ter me it 'ud be soothing after seeing those chickens. Now, as 'e ever given you anythink?

EMILY. Yuss, Cook. He giv me a locket and a anagram.

COOK. Anagram! What's a anagram?

EMILY. It's poetry.

COOK. Do you know it?

EMILY. Yuss, I think so——

COOK. Go on! Let's 'eat it.



# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

[Monotonously.]

EMILY. All right, Cook.

"My first is coloured like the rose,  
That scents the garden far and wide;  
My second tells of sparkling snows;  
My third——"

COOK. I can't make head or tail of that, Emily. If that's an anagrammar I can do without it. You might show me the locket.

EMILY. The locket?

COOK. Yes, the one he sent you.

EMILY [embarrassed]. Oh, that one. I—sent it back.

COOK. Never!

EMILY. Yes, I did. I thought it wasn't right for me to take it.

COOK. Well, you were a looney! Catch me a-send back of any jewellery or suchlike. Now if it was the anagrammar you sent back I could 'ave understood it. Is Ada back so soon?

ADA. They 'aven't touched the pudding, Cook, no more than just ter play with it. Master, he laughed contentuous, and pushed 'is plate away. Mr Forbes, he made effort, but hid most under his spoon, and as to Missus bit her lip.

COOK [moving to the oven and making ready the savoury]. Well, the savoury's just on ready. It's angels on back.

ADA. Enough for us? I always was partial to the

COOK. I've made six good 'elpings, and Miss Angela touch it, so we ought ter 'ave three over. Don't come a second time.

ADA. No fear. What do you take me for? Oh, I found out what was the matter between Miss Angela and Mr F.

## BETWEEN THE SOUP AND THE SAVOURY

COOK. Oh, indeed?

[EMILY shows interest.

ADA. Yes. Seems she's lost something he sent her and it's caused such a to-do.

COOK. What is it that's lost?

ADA. Something by the name of an anagram. [EMILY in agitation drops a knife on a plate] He said a bit of it—something about my first and my second: sounded like his wives.

COOK [startled]. My first and my second!

ADA. Yes. I don't wonder you're surprised. From all I could hear it was some sort of a riddle, and they was to have found it out together. My first is coloured like a nose—or some such contrivance. Come on with the savoury. We shall never be finished.

COOK. Did he say anything about some locket he'd sent her?

ADA. Yes—how did you know?

COOK. Something told me.

[The bell rings. She puts the savoury on ADA's tray.

ADA. Oh, they're a hungry lot, they are! They won't be a minute polishing this off. I shall stop up for the fruit. Bye-bye, I am looking forward to this savoury.

[The bell goes again. She makes a face at ceiling and exits, closing the door behind her with her foot.

COOK. Well, Emily, per'aps you'll be so good as to explain yourself!

EMILY. Explain myself?

COOK. That's what I said. You're not going to tell me there's two young men a-sending of two locketts and two anagrammists to both of you?

EMILY. No, Cook.

COOK. No, Cook. I should think not! You—you 'aven't bin carryin' on with Mr Forbes, 'ave you?

EMILY. No, Cook.

# CONTRACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

COOK. Say it, if you can Cook! There can't be any of apoplexy or any of that sort, I suppose!

EMILY. No, Cook!

COOK. Well, then, Emily Anne, when is 'em's time to happen?

EMILY. I don't feel as I can ever explain.

COOK. Well, you have a try, that's all, or it might be my duty to go to Miss

EMILY. Oh, my Cook! I don't tell you, only I'm put to it to begin, somehow.

COOK. Well, I'll look the other way. Go on.

EMILY. Well, first of all, it isn't so 'Ar did at all.

COOK. Ar 'Ar?

EMILY. No, not never was.

COOK. Well, then? But who wrote the letters?

EMILY. Mr Forbes.

COOK. Then you have been carrying on with Miss Angela's fiancée?

EMILY. No—the letters wasn't written to me.

COOK. Emily, to whom was they written?

EMILY. To Miss Angela.

COOK. Did you intercept them? Stop them from getting to her?

EMILY. No.

COOK. What, then?

EMILY. I only borrowed them!

COOK. Borrowed them?

EMILY (with a sniff). Yes. I did so want to have a bit of romance, and Mr Forbes he's always bin my idol. And they looked so nice all tied up with ribbon, and I only kept one or two of 'em a day at a time.

COOK. Oh, then you've bin making a 'abit of this, 'ave you? 'Ow did you find out where they was kept?

EMILY. One morning when Rose was pushed I was 'elping

## BETWEEN THE SOUP AND THE SAVOURY

'er do the rooms. I put away Miss Angela's stocking, and there the packet was, and I saw just a little bit, and I pulled one out, and after that I used ter borrow them regular.

COOK. It's no better than stealing. Of course there's times you can't 'elp seeing a bit of a letter, and no 'arm either if it's left about. But taking them away—no. And then showing them to us as your own! Well, Emily!

*[She turns away disgusted.]*

EMILY. It was a bit of pride.

COOK. Pride?

EMILY. Yuss. I know you ain't meant it, Cook, but it's cut me cruel to 'ave you and Ada always a-making fun of me. You don't know how us ugly ones feels over a little thing like that. Mother was the same—she'd give me a push and say, "Go away, you little moral, you won't never get a husband!" It used ter 'urt me awful.

*[Burying her head in her hands, she sits, sobbing.]*

COOK. You're a queer customer, Emily, but I don't believe there's much 'arm in you. You're touched, that's all it is, a bit touched

EMILY *[gratefully]*. Oh, Cook!

COOK. Of course, if I was to do my duty, I should report this to 'her.' But there, I don't hold with telling tales. Servants must 'ang together, or what's ter become of England! Besides that, I see that per'aps things 'ave bin a bit 'ard for you, Emily, what with your face an' all.

EMILY. Oh, Cook!

*[EMILY cries, overwhelmed by COOK's kindness.]*

COOK. There, don't 'owl. You'd better put those letters back in the drawer. Not under the stockings—the'll 'ave looked there. Come ter think of it, she'll have turned out the 'ole place if there's bin a rumpus. Better put them be'ind the drawer, see?

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

EMILY. Yes, Cook.

COOK. And don't you ever touch 'em again, Emily.

EMILY. No, Cook.

COOK. I shan't say nothing to Ada about this affair. Ada's so 'igh-minded, she might not see it the same way I do.

EMILY. Thank you very kindly.

COOK. Wait a bit, though. 'Ow are we going to explain about 'Arold? Why he don't write no more nor come ter see yer nor anything? [EMILY shakes her head.] Strike her at 'hece, that would. Ada's so sharp.

EMILY. So she is. I suppose I couldn't say as 'ow I'd broken it off?

COOK. Well, 'ardly. You've got to think of something likely.

EMILY. Can I say 'e's broken it off?

COOK. Of course you can. That'll sound quite nat'ril. He's thought it over and broken it off, and mind you act according.

EMILY. I don't like ter think of 'im doing such a thing!

COOK. Now, Emily, when there's no such person as 'Arold! I've no patience with you! Now don't you go filling your 'ead up any more with romances and idols and all them fancy dishes. Roses and snowies and noes are all very well for such as can afford them; you can't. You do your duty and keep your saucepans clean, [with great condescension] and per'aps, 'ow knows, I might take you over to see my mother at Putney!

EMILY [gratefully]. Oh, Cook!

COOK. So it ain't turned out so badly after all. Sh! Here's Ada! [To ease the situation she hums a tune]

[Enter ADA, boiling with indignation. She comes quickly to the table.]

COOK. Why, Ada, what's the matter?

## BETWEEN THE SOUP AND THE SAVOURY

ADA [*holding up the empty dish*]. Here's the savoury! 'Aven't left so much of it as a crumb of toast! Greedy, guzzling pigs, I call 'em!

[*She bangs the dish down. COOK and EMILY are overwhelmed by the gluttony of their employers.*]

CURTAIN



# MASTER WAYFARER

## A HAPPENING OF LONG AGO

By J. E. HAROLD TERRY

SONGS BY ARTHUR SCOTT CLAVEN

### CHARACTERS

THE MAID

THE MAN

THE VILLAIN

THE WAYFARER

SCENE. *The parlour of "The Pigeon Pie"—a  
wayside hostelry on the road to York.*

TIME. *150 years ago, or more.*

This play was presented for the first time in London  
at the Apollo Theatre, on December 4, 1917, with the  
following cast:

*The Maid* . . . Miss ELSIE STRANACK

*The Man* . . . Mr ALFRED PAUMIER

*The Villain* . . . Mr ERIC COWLEY

*The Wayfarer* . . Mr C. HAYDEN COFFIN



• MR HAROLD TERRY edited *Granta* when he was at Cambridge, and afterward joined the staff of *The Onlooker* and *The British Review*, for which he wrote excellent dramatic criticism. Unlike many dramatic critics, Mr Terry is himself the author of a number of plays, including "Old Rowley, the King," "A King's Ransom," "The Knight of the Garter," and (in collaboration with Mr Lechmere Worrall) "The Man who Stayed at Home."

Mr Terry has had considerable experience on the stage, and was for several years the Honorary Secretary of the Dramatists' Club.

# MASTER WAYFARER<sup>1</sup>

SCENE: *The parlour of "The Pigeon Pie."*

*A cosy room, oak-panelled, with heavy beams running athwart the ceiling. Hams and bacon hang by hooks from the rafters. There is a big open fireplace and inglenook. The floor is sanded. Upon a rack behind the bar are bottles, quaintly shaped, and shining pewter mugs. Three steps beside the bar lead to an inner room. There is another door, which gives on to the highroad.*

*When the curtain rises (see p. 7 of vocal score) the room is in complete darkness save for the light cast by the fire, and for the moonbeams which come intermittently through the small latticed window. The wind whistles in the chimney. It is a bleak winter night.*

*The MAID enters by the steps from the inner room, bearing a lighted taper. She is in holiday mood, and sings a snatch from some old love-song with a haunting melody. (The first verse of No 8 in the vocal score.) She is the daughter of the house, and the deity presiding over the bar-parlour. A well-favoured lass, trim and neat, she is. Romance, so she believes, has come to her at last, and it has called forth a coquetry hitherto dormant in her. She is all primitive woman to-night, excited, expectant, restless. She lights*

<sup>1</sup> Applications regarding amateur performances of this play should be addressed to Messrs Samuel French, Ltd., 26 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, or 25 West 45th Street, New York.

The music for "Master Wayfarer," by Howard Carr, is published by Messrs Samuel French, Ltd. (4s).

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

*the candles above the mantel, and upon the table, then goes to the window and gazes out into the night. Reluctantly she draws the curtains, and, passing behind the bar, busies herself with bottles and mugs. The latch of the outer door is lifted (song ceases), and with a glad cry she runs to meet the incomer. The MAN steps across the threshold, and the joy in her face changes to petulant disappointment. The MAN is a stalwart Yorkshire farmer, gruff of speech, and bluff of manner. He wears a heavy riding-coat, with cape, and a three cornered hat it is set upon his unbewigged head. He closes the door, and stamps the snow from off his riding-boots.*

MAID. You!

MAN. Ay, it's me. Belike you was expecting somebody more to your taste.

MAID [*perfly*]. Ask no questions, Master Beamish, and you'll be told no lies. [Comes C.]

MAN. So it's to be Master Beamish now, is it? [*He laughs in bitter derision as he removes his cloak and places it upon a chair beside the door.*] As ye will, Miss Phœbe.

MAID [*demurely*]. I hope I am always respectful to our customers. . . . A mug of ale, Master Beamish?

[*She moves towards the bar.*]

MAN. Phœbe, you know I've not come here for drink—though the Lord knows you've done your best to drive me to it! [*He crosses to C., behind the table.*]

MAID. I would I had succeeded. Trade's very slack to-night.

MAN [*R. C.*]. 'Twill be brisk enough when Jack-a dandy comes.

MAID [*flaming into anger at once*]. Who mean you by Jack-a-dandy? [*She faces him across the table*]

## MASTER WAYFARER

MAN [*in ponderous imitation of her previous retort to him*]. Ask no questions, Phœbe, and you'll be told no lies.

MAID. Oh! . . . I hate you!

MAN. And I hate Jack-a-dandy! [*He turns aside.*]

MAID. Coward!

MAN [*turning again to face her*]. I'm not that, Phœbe.

MAID. You are! Were he here now, would you then call him Jack-a-dandy? Not you! 'Twould be, "I prithee, Master Smeaton." "By your leave, Master Smeaton." 'Twould be——

MAN. 'Twould not!—and well you know it. [*He goes over to her. Pleadingly*] What's come to you, Phœbe! You was glad enough to be my lass afore this peacock came—with his frills, and his laces, and his woman's ways. If he was a better man nor me I wouldn't take it so badly, but——

[PHŒBE interrupts him with a burst of contemptuous laughter.]

MAID. You as good a man as he! La! 'Tis too funny! . . . For what cause have you ever risked your precious skin?

MAN [*darkly*]. Maybe I will risk it in a good cause soon.

MAID [*with fine contempt*]. Ay, this year, next year, sometime, never! But Master Smeaton——!

MAN. Well!

MAID. He has risked everything, lost everything—for his king!

MAN. His king?

MAID. Ay, his king and mine—King James.

MAN. A traitor, eh?

MAID. A hero!

MAN. 'Tis a pretty story!

MAID. And a true one. I had it from his own lips. [*The MAN laughs scornfully.*] That is how it comes that he is here in hiding.

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

MAN. I'll warrant me 'tis true he is in hiding.

MAID [*furiously*]. What do you mean?

MAN. I mean that your pretty gentleman is a rogue, and I can prove it. Prince Charlie! Pshaw! warrant me he's never had closer kinship with Prince Charlie than an empty belly may have given him!

MAID. Coward! Coward! Coward!

MAN. Hard words break no bones, lass.

MAID. I would to God they did! . . . Oh, if I had Master Smeaton's arm——!

MAN. What then?

MAID. I would thrash you until you cried on me for mercy.

[*The MAN is mightily amused. He laughs derisively.*]

MAN. Think you Jack-a-dandy's arm would be enough for that?

MAID. You shall make test of it.

MAN. I ask no better fortune. When?

MAID. Now—in a few minutes.

MAN. So you *are* expecting him! Good! 'Twill be a meeting after my own heart.

MAID. And mine. Oh, if only he might kill you!

MAN. Phoebe!

MAID. I'll stay no longer in the same room with you. There'll be no customers to-night, until he comes. Then God help you, Master Braggart!

[*Cue for music—*]

[*She goes up the steps, L. C., and*]

[*The MAN sinks on to the settle of the inglenook, gazes miserably into the fire. He takes a notice from his pocket—a "Hue and Cry" for some criminal—scans it intently, sighs, and puts it back into his coat. The wind howls in the chimney. A brief silence is broken by a loud, shrill cry of a Punch-and-Judy*]

## MASTER WAYFARER

*"What-a-pity—What-a-pity—What-a-pity!"*  
The MAN starts and listens. The cry is repeated, and is followed by a rapping upon the outer door. The MAN rises, crosses to the door, and opens it. On the threshold stands a quaint figure—a WAYFARER, a travelling showman. His stock-in-trade is carried in a pack suspended from his shoulders. His clothes have at some distant time been rich and costly. Now they are patched and worn, sad relics of themselves. A ragged cloak covers his shoulders. His brown tie-wig calls for the urgent attention of a perruquier. He bows low to the MAN with an extravagant affectation of courtesy.

WAYFARER. Good sir, I thank you. If yonder creaking sign be not this is a house to which even the sorriest wayfarer is welcome.

MAN. 'Tis an inn, if that's what you mean, and a famous one—"The Pigeon Pie" on the York road.

WAYFARER [*stepping across the threshold*]. Truly a sign to make the mouth water. But, egad, 'twould have a like effect on me were it named "The Cold Beet and Onion" or "The Sheep's Head." I'faith, "The Bread and Cheese" would be by no means amiss. There is much merit in a succulent sign, sir.

MAN [*absently*]. Ay, I've no doubt.

WAYFARER. Fortunate fellow! For myself I have much doubt of everything, save that to-morrow will be much as yesterday, and the day after as the day before, that joy lives short and misery long—and that I am like to starve to death as you close not that door.

[*The MAN, whose attention has been riveted upon the roadway, up and down which he has gazed in the hope of observing the approach of his rival, closes the door reluctantly.*]

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

MAN. Ay, 'tis a bleak night. Get you to the fire and warm yourself.

WAYFARER. With all my heart. [*He holds out his hands to the blaze.*] A good fire, sir, you will grant me, is agreeable a commodity in this life as we are like to find it disagreeable in the next.

MAN [*seating himself disconsolately upon the bench before the table*]. It's right enough for them as is careful not to touch with it.

WAYFARER. A most sound observation. [*He observes intently.*] You have a reason, sir, for that remark.

MAN. McBbe. [*A pause.*] What was that strange you gave afore you rapped upon the door?

WAYFARER. 'Twas the call of my calling, sir; and with the rum of my philosophy

MAN. I know little o' such things. Dost mean thou a Punch-and-Judy man?

WAYFARER. You have me, sir—a Punch-and-Judy [*He slips the pack from his shoulder.*] What-a-pity—What-a-pity—What-a-pity!

MAN. Ay! 'Tis a pity, truly.

WAYFARER. I thank you, sir, for your good opinion. [*The WAYFARER bows with ironic courtesy.*]

[*The MAN sighs and falls into a gloomy reverie.*]  
WAYFARER, having bestowed on him a look of half mocking, half compassionate, turns at the fire.

WAYFARER. A kettle! By all the gods, a kettle on the fire.

MAN. Does that suggest ought to you?

WAYFARER. It does indeed, sir! It suggests lemon sugar, and the best Jamaica! If my suggestion be to your taste I pray you fall in with it.

MAN. And I can find the bottle, very willingly.

[*He goes to the bar and searches the shelves.*]

## MASTER WAYFARER

Ah, here it be.

*[He pours the spirit into two glasses, and having added the necessary modicum of sugar and sliced lemon, both of which lie in his hand, he bears them down to the WAYFARER, who fills them with water from the kettle.]*

WAYFARER. You, sir, I take it, are mine host of this delectable establishment?

MAN. Not so, Mister Showman. I serve as penance for having spoken my mind too free.

WAYFARER. Egad, 'tis a penance I could find it in my heart to envy you. . . . I drink to your better acquaintance, Mister Penitent.

*[The MAN has seated himself upon the bench again, and, absorbed in gloomy thought, pays scant heed to his companion's chattering. There comes a pause.]*

*[The WAYFARER lays a hand upon his shoulder.]*

Good sir, you take your offence too much to heart. . . . You are not sick!

MAN. Of body, no.

WAYFARER. Of mind?

MAN. Of heart!

WAYFARER. Oh! You have been crossed in love, eh? . . . Tut-tut-tut-tut-tee! *[He utters Punch's cry.]* What-a-pity—What-a-pity—What-a-pity!

*[The MAN shakes his head from his shoulder impatiently, and moves away in the armchair below the fireplace.]*

MAN. I am in no mood for jesting!

WAYFARER. I do not jest, sir. To no jesting matter. Of my own experience can I say so much, and more. But where's the woman the wide world over that's worth the breaking of a stout heart? *[Cue for music—No. 3.]* You are young, Master Balloonist. I am an old campaigner.

*[He sings]*



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

Youth is a fable, and love an illusion  
 (I've sounded the depths of them both in my time);  
 And I'm come to this pleasant and happy conclusion—  
 That fifty's the age when a man's in his prime!  
 At twenty he thinks he knows all things worth knowing,  
 At thirty he doesn't—his pride's had a fall.  
 At forty in modesty yearly he's growing,  
 At fifty he knows he knows nothing at all!

So it's good to be fifty,  
 Full-ripened and mellow.  
 A happy-go-lucky, light-hearted old fellow!  
 Who's done with love's folly,  
 Content to be jolly.  
 Away melancholy! I'm fifty and wise!  
 Sing heigho, my hearty!—I'm fifty.

Time was when our sweethearts and better halves ruled us!  
 (Young love made me trusting, and blind as a bat)  
 But now when they're charming—'tis they who have schooled us—  
 We know that they're wanting a new summer hat.  
 Take love in the abstract, and wile from these slumbers!  
 Who loves but one time just rides for a fall.  
 The ladies—God bless them!—There's safety in numbers.  
 Love one, and love fifty—It's room for them all!

So it's good to be fifty,  
 Full ripened and mellow.  
 A happy-go-lucky, light-hearted old fellow!  
 Who's done with love's folly,  
 Content to be jolly.  
 Away melancholy! I'm fifty and wise!  
 Sing heigho, my hearty!—I'm fifty.

[*Exeunt*]

Oh, when we were younger and taller and thinner,  
 We swore by the light of the moon and the stars;  
 But at fifty we swear by a jolly good ones,  
 With hot punch to follow, clay pipes and cigars.

## MASTER WAYFARER

For love is a *saagid*, and sweet in the distance :

'Tis food for the young—I was young once myself—

But comfort and ease are the *pâtes de résistance*,

When love's little follies are laid on the shelf.

So it's good to be fifty,

Full-ripened and mellow

A happy-go-lucky, high-hearted old fellow!

Who's done with love's folly,

Content to be jolly.

Away melancholy!—I'm fifty and wise!

Sing heigho, my hearty!—I'm fifty

*[He drops, laughing, into the armchair above the fireplace.]*

MAN. 'Tis plain you've never suffered at the hands of a woman, Master Showman.

WAYFARER. Is it? . . . Ha! *[He laughs bitterly and rises.]* Two little hands, so white and delicate, they thrust me into hell! *[He comes C]*

MAN *[very uncomfortably]* I ask your pardon, sir—I—

*[He rises and moves towards the WAYFARER.]*

WAYFARER. Don't think that I was always at you see me now!—always a Punch and Judy man!

MAN. As to that, sir, I cannot say

WAYFARER. But I can! When I was your age I was an actor. No mere strolling mummer, but the peer of Garrick and of Sheridan—names to compare with!

MAN. Conjurers were they!

*[He returns to the chair below the fireplace]*

WAYFARER. Good lord! They are the greatest actors of our age! Surely you have heard of David Garrick!

MAN. No, I can't say that I have

WAYFARER. And such is true! No matter. *[He seats himself for a touch, C]* I was doing well! Had I once acted—  
an hundred guineas and more—I was married, and I loved

# THE PLAYERS OF TODAY

There's a fellow, and how old I'm not  
 I'm sure of it, but I'm sure of many things in my time;  
 And I'm sure of that you and I have many things in common  
 For I feel that you, when you're not in the game,  
 To get on the stage, to get on the stage,  
 To get on the stage, to get on the stage,  
 To get on the stage, to get on the stage,  
 To get on the stage, to get on the stage,  
 To get on the stage, to get on the stage,

So it's good to be fifty,  
 Full-aged and mellow,  
 A happy-go-lucky, light-hearted old fellow,  
 Who's done with love's lullaby,  
 Content to be jolly,  
 Away melancholy! I'm fifty and woe!  
 Sing bough, my hearty!—I'm fifty.

There was when our sweethearts and better halves ruled us  
 (You've love made me trusting, and I blind as a bat)  
 But now when they're charming, as they who have school-  
 We know that they're serving a new summer hat.  
 Take love as the abstract, and write from these numbers!  
 Who loves but me alone just rules for a fall.  
 'The ladies—God bless them!' There's misery in numbers!  
 Love one, and love none! I see I am for them all!

So it's good to be fifty,  
 Full-aged and mellow,  
 A happy-go-lucky, light-hearted old fellow,  
 Who's done with love's lullaby,  
 Content to be jolly,  
 Away melancholy! I'm fifty and woe!  
 Sing bough, my hearty!—I'm fifty. [Exit]

Oh, when we were younger and sadder and thinner  
 We swore by the light of the moon and the stars,  
 But at fifty we swear by a jolly good dinner,  
 With hot punch to follow, clay pipes and cigars.

## MASTER WAYFARER

For love is a *sauffe*, and sweet in the distance :

'Tis food for the young—I was young once myself—

But comfort and ease are the *pièce de résistance*,

When love's little follies are laid on the shelf.

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Content to be jolly.

Away melancholy!—I'm fifty and wise!

Sing bigho, my hearty!—I'm fifty.

*[He drops, laughing, into the armchair above the fireplace.]*

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MAN *[very uncomfortably]*. I ask your pardon, sir—I—

*[He rises and moves towards the WAYFARER.]*

WAYFARER. Don't think that I was always as you see me now!—always a Punch and Judy man!

MAN. As to that, sir, I cannot say.

WAYFARER. But I can! When I was your age I was an actor. No mere strutting mummer, but the peer of Garrick and of Sheridan—names to compare with!

MAN. Conjurors were they?

*[He returns to the chair below the fireplace.]*

WAYFARER. God forbid! They are the greatest actors of our age! Surely you have heard of David Garrick!

MAN. No, I can't say that I have.

WAYFARER. And such is fame! No matter. *[He seats himself on bench, C.]* I was doing well. *[He moves and sits—]* in hundred guineas and more. I was married, and I loved

ONE ACT PLAYS OF TO DAY

my wife. We had a Frenchman, a little partying man  
from Paris, at his own table. Such was the first  
of our party. There were Frenchmen.

was. How comes it then — I  
 wonder. The devil says even my Father — the de-  
 velopment is a serious question. He stole my Mother for  
 me to be a slave, and she took with her all my strength,  
 my life, and my love. That was the worst  
 of it. The fact I was music — the [His life in glory]  
 and the greatest actor of his day, enters the Parish  
 [My mother]

My story, too, concerns the devil-driven is a [More]

was "Through a twelvemonth gone since my last  
 flighted out tooth. I am a dilettante, bred and  
 farming the land my fathers farmed. We're simple  
 but we're honest, and we're comfortable, and 'twas the  
 a rare thing for the lass whose mother kept a  
 Pigeon Pie" that she should have the chance to  
 Bramble. . . . 'Twas fard we should be wed a sen-  
 tence. But now —  
 (She strikes back the lamp that rises in his  
 eyes, and he is left, eh?)

WAYFARER. That is the devil's cue to enter, eh?  
 MAN. Ay, and is damned a rogue as ever soiled  
 leather! Look you here, Master Showman, what is  
 to this?

WAYFARER. That is the devil's cue to enter, eh?  
 MAN. Ay, and as damned a rogue as ever soiled  
 leather! Look you here, Master Showman, what sa-  
 to this?  
 [He takes the "Blue and Grey" from his  
 and spreads it out on the table before the  
 WAYFARER. "Blue and Grey" [He sits in chair

WAYFARER. A "Hue and Cry"! [He sits in chair, reads the paper.] Is this the man?  
[Loud knock.] My life on't!

WAYFARER [reading from the bill]. "A notorious and

WAYFARER [reading from the bill]. "A notorious and

## MASTER WAYFARER

coined money—of dainty manners and elaborate dress—passes for a person of position—grey eyes—full colour—a triangular scar upon his forehead concealed by his wig.

H'm! How accounts he for his presence in this haunted spot?

MAN *[with fine scorn]*. Tch! He has won all the women's foolish hearts by giving out that he is a fugitive from Cul-loden, one of Prince Charlie's noblemen! Oh, he tells wondrous tales of Falkirk and of Prestonpaul. You shall hear for yourself, and judge accordingly.

WAYFARER. When?

MAN. Now—to-night.

WAYFARER. Does he come here?

MAN. Ay, any minute now. Damn his black heart!

*[He rises and moves L. C.]*

WAYFARER. Egad, then we shall see some sport! I'm for you, Master Dalesman. Count me on your side.

*[He holds out his hand. The MAN grasps it warmly.]*

MAN. I thank you. . . . Ah!

*[The exclamation is evoked by the sound of the MAID'S voice crooning the song that she was singing when the curtain rose. The WAYFARER stands rigid, a strange look upon his face.]*

WAYFARER. Who sings?

MAN. My lass. *[He sighs deeply and adds as he moves over to the fire.]* My lass that was.

WAYFARER. 'Tis an uncommon air.

MAN. Ay, and like to be. She's always singing it, and many's the time she's told me how 'twas a fancy of her father, who died when she was but a little 'un.

WAYFARER *[in intense excitement—almost shouting]*. What say you? Have you a picture of her—this lass of yours?

MAN. Ay—but what's made thee so excited, Master Showman?

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

WAYFARER. Give it to me! Let me see it! *[As she fumbles with a chain about his neck]* Oh, make haste!

MAN. 'Tis no new picture, but 'twas the only one she to give me. 'Twas painted when she was but a toddle mite. Yet 'tis like her.

*[He opens a locket and passes it to the WAYFARER whose face grows radiant at sight of it. He is oblivious of the presence of the MAN, who regards him with eyes wide with wonder.]*

WAYFARER. Phœbe! Little Phœbe!

*[He presses the portrait to his forehead.]*

MAN. Phœbe! How knew you her name was Phœbe? WAYFARER *[suddenly recalled to earth—hesitates, and runs to the bench]*. I—— Oh, ask me no questions now, Master Dalesman, I beg of you!

MAN. But—— *[His slow brain begins to revolve.]* Now I do bethink me——!

WAYFARER *[with energy]*. Bethink you of nothing but the best we may contrive to entrap the rogue who would rob you of your happiness. Master Dalesman, your true-love shall be restored to your arms this night *[cue for music—No. 4]* I am fit for nothing save to be that I am—a Punch-and-Judy man. . . . Sh!

*[He lays a finger on his lips as the latch of the door lifts and the door itself opens to admit the VILLAIN. A good-looking fellow is he, elegantly dressed. He affects a powdered wig, and a ruff, and grasps his sword so that his blade falls in graceful folds. He enters the room with confidence, and hardly has he closed the door when the MAID re-enters from the inner room. Obviously she has been listening for his coming, and as elaborate as his meet is the curtsy with which she greets him.]*

## MASTER WAYFARER

[*The WAYFARER (D. S. L.) keeps his eyes fixed on her. There is a great yearning in them. As the play proceeds so he gazes long and earnestly upon her whenever he can do so unperceived by her. The MAN observes this and judges accordingly.*

VILLAIN [*lifting her hand to his lips*]. Sweet mistress, I ask your pardon that I am late for our tryst. This weather, and the King's business——

MAID. That had excused you had you not come at all. But I am glad that you have come—as also, methinks, is there some one who is not.

[*Moves down from door to C. above table. (She looks with contempt at the MAN. He springs to his feet with angry exclamation, eager to give the lie to her insinuation. The WAYFARER, however, intervenes.*

WAYFARER. Nay, lady, not so. Yon gentleman and I are grown weary of our own company. If my lord will but condescend to join us——

[*A bow and a wave of his hand serve for completion of his sentence.*

VILLAIN [*well pleased and laughingly*]. My lord, eh? How comes it, sir, that you are able to discern my rank?

WAYFARER. Good breeding, sir, is even as murder—it will out!

VILLAIN. Happily answered. 'Twill afford me pleasure, sir, if you will drink with me. [*He swaggers down to the table, and divests himself of his cloak.*] Ah, Master Beamish, good even to you.

MAN [*cullenly*]. Good even. [*He sits in the armchair below the fire.*]

VILLAIN. You will join us?

[*The MAN is about to refuse when he catches the WAYFARER'S eye. The latter signals to him to accept*



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

MAN [*reluctantly*]. I thank you.

VILLAIN. What shall it be?

WAYFARER. An you inquire of me, my lord, Jamaica, hot, with sugar and a slice of lemon.

VILLAIN. An inspiration! You, Master Beamish?

MAN. I'm for the same.

VILLAIN. Then, good Mistress Phœbe, are we all three of a mind. Wilt serve us?

MAID. As generously as you have served our king.

[*She moves up to the bar.*]

MAN. Then will you serve us from an empty bottle.

VILLAIN [*quick to take offence*]. What mean you, sir?

WAYFARER [*swift and suave*]. 'Tis very plain, my lord. Our friend would indicate that, having given of your all unto your king, now you have no more left to give.

[*He gives the MAN a warning kick.*]

VILLAIN. I had not thought him capable of so pretty a compliment.

MAID. Nor have I found him so.

[*She bands round the tankards, giving the first to the MAN, the second to the WAYFARER, and the third to the VILLAIN, and then proceeds to fill them in the same order from the kettle, which she fetches from the hob.*]

WAYFARER. Ah, then you know him not. P'faith, never have I met with a more subtle wit. 'Twas a rare thought of his to compare your lordship with an empty bottle.

VILLAIN. Upon my life I see it not. I should be hard put to it to conceive of anything more useless.

WAYFARER. Nay, on the contrary, my lord. Has not an empty bottle done its duty once? Is it not ready to do the like again? [*He lifts his glass.*] Your health, my lord!

VILLAIN [*clinking glasses with him*]. And yours, good Master Wayfarer. [*He turns to the MAN.*] Methinks,

## MASTER WAYFARER

Master Beamish, you are fortunate in your interpreter. He has a rare grasp of the Yorkshire idiom!

*[The MAID replaces the kettle on the hob.]*

MAN. 'Twill serve for them as likes not the taste o' plain speech.

VILLAIN. It would seem, sir, that you are trying to pick a quarrel with me.

WAYFARER. Nay, nay! You are too hasty, my lord. What man of spirit can stomach plain food or a plain wench? None! Then, why, by that same token, should he have a taste for plain speech? ●

MAID. I know not about a plain wench. But plain food is healthy, and so is plain speech.

MAN. Well spoken, Phoebe! That's the spirit o' the daler.

MAID. I did not address you, Master Beamish. Plain speech, methinks, were little suited to your stomach.

MAN *[with determination]*. Master Smeaton, I have drunk with you. I would discharge the debt. Wilt drink with me?

VILLAIN *[struggling his shoulders]*. Since you put it so prettily, sir——

MAN *[to WAYFARER]*. Art o' the same mind?

WAYFARER *[hesitating]*. I thank you, Master Beamish, but——

MAID. An you continue your journeying to night, sir, you will need something to keep out the cold. 'Tis a bitter winter.

WAYFARER *[looking regretfully into his empty glass]*. Ay, verily, 'tis true that one swallow does not make a summer.

*[He holds out his tankard to her. The MAID takes it with the two other tankards up to the bar, where she refills them.]*

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

VILLAIN [*laughing*]. An your wit could keep you sir, you would have small need of other covering. journey far?

WAYFARER. To York, or as nigh as I can come to it.

VILLAIN. But why such haste?

WAYFARER. 'Tis the fair the day after to-morrow.

*[He moves over to the chair above the fireplace proceeds to unstrap the box that he brought in him.]*

MAID [*with quick interest—moving down to him*]. You a Showman, then?

WAYFARER. An insignificant one, fair mistress—a Punch-and-Judy man.

VILLAIN. A Punch-and-Judy man! Egad, then you sh provide us with an entertainment. *[The MAID takes a kettle from the hob and fills up the tankards that the MAID upon the counter of the bar.]* Out with your puppets, Mister Showman! *[He creeps aside the WAYFARER's demur.]* I'll pay you well for it.

WAYFARER. An you will pay me as well, my lord, I can entertain you better and at less pains to myself. I am a noted teller of right merry tales. A singer, withal, and a mean dancer. *[He skips lightly D. S. R.]* How shall I please you best, my noble lord?

VILLAIN. So be that you *do* entertain us, I will leave the manner of our entertaining to you.

*[The MAID comes down with the tankards to a table, R]*

WAYFARER. How say you, sweet mistress?

MAID [*as she hands his drink to him*]. I have lost a ball!

WAYFARER. A ball'd be it. You shall have my lute. 'Tis suited to all tastes, for 'tis spiced with liquor for my lord, and with love for my lady.

*[The villain takes a tankard from the tray that the*

## MASTER WAYFARER

MAID *offers to him. She moves down L. C. and gives the one remaining to the MAN.*

MAN. Give us first a taste of your acting, Master Showman.

VILLAIN [*insolently incredulous*]. Canst act?

[*He swaggers to C. above the table.*]

WAYFARER. It has been said of me at Drury Lane that I can.

MAID [*with excitement*]. Then do, I prithee, sir! I have never seen an actor.

[*She kneels on the chair R. of the table, facing M.*]

VILLAIN [*with lazy contempt*]. Nor are you like to now—unless so be that Garrick has turned Punch-and-Judy man.

WAYFARER. Stranger things than that have happened, sir I have seen a common rogue actor enough to pass muster as a lord! Now you shall see, if not Garrick turned Punch-and-Judy man, at least a Punch-and-Judy man turned Garrick.

[*Cue for music—No. 3.*]

[*The MAID crosses to the chair L. of the table, the VILLAIN to the chair above the fireplace. The WAYFARER sings, addressing himself to the VILLAIN.*]

For one nimble little shilling  
On a word from you I'm willing  
To enact a drama thrilling.

Or the lightest light burlesque.  
I'm a player ripe and mellow,  
Quite a many-sided fellow—  
From a smothering Othello  
To a mountebank grotesque.

Without bounce or puff or frothing,  
From Macbeth intent on killing,  
Or your Shylock set on spilling  
Christian blood, to red-nosed clown

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

Let me state the simple fact, sir,  
There's no part I *can/dv't* act, sir,  
If you'd change the nimble shilling  
To a nimbler half a crown.

If as Romeo you'd "shoo" me,  
Or as Benedick you'd "boo" me,  
(As a Hamlet dark and gloomy,  
I am equally at home)  
Or a noble-hearted hero,  
Or a fat and foolish Priestrot,  
Or an evil-minded Nero,  
Fiddling to a burning Rome—  
All these parts I would enact, sir,  
As in town to houses packed, sir,  
With the greatest skill and tact, sir,  
For one golden guinea down.

VILLAIN. Well, a guinea agreed to! Now then, for a tu  
of your quality.

WAYFARER. 'Tis all impromptu, my lord; impromptu  
drama, as it please you!

*{The WAYFARER declaims to me}*

Curtain rises! Act one! We discover,  
In a sweet country lane,  
A young love-stricken swain.

*{To the M}*

(No desire to offend—  
Any name would suffice—  
'Tis impromptu, my friend,  
And your name sounds so nice) . . .  
] In Beamish, a young yeoman lover;  
Honest John, stout, staid;  
Then a sweet little ma J.

*{To the M}*

With as many rare dimples as roses, I'm afra  
Humbly he meets her,

## MASTER WAYFARER

Tenderly greets her,  
Ardently, eagerly, softly entreats her.

But she—naughty puss!—straightaway from him trips,  
With sweet roguish eyes, and a smile on her lips:

[*He sings.*

Tra, la, la, la! No, I fear you won't do,  
For I love a young lordling much better than you.

'Tra, la, la, la! Good day!

[*He dances a few steps with the MAID, who finishes in chair R. of table, and then proceeds.*

Curtain rises! Act two! We discover

In the same country lane

A young turkey-cock vain—

[*To the VILLAIN.*

With ruffle and sword,

And a cock-a-hoop air,

(You'll excuse me, my lord,

But of fine clothes beware!)

No man for a country maid's lover!

Then the same little jadet . . .

[*To the MAID—holding her tenderly.*

Nay, a sweet little maid,

But with much too much faith in his word, I'm afraid!

Proudly he meets her,

Laughingly greets her,

Daintily, lazily, lightly entreats her.

But she—prudent maid!—straightaway from him trips,

With a flash in her eyes, and no smile on her lips!

[*He sings.*

Fie, tra, la, la! You are no lordling true,

Of spurious coinage, my lord—Lord knows who!

Tra, la, la, la, la! Good-bye!

[*Straightway he breaks into a dance, and, as before, beckons the MAID to be his partner. She joins him with a zest. Every now and again his steps falter as his thoughts stray from the dance to the girl who faces him. She observes this and rallies him merrily: "Hess-ness, Master Struman? You*

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

*are out of step!" or "Good sir, you lag! Quicker! Quicker!" The dance ends and she sinks into the chair R. of table, laughing delightedly. The MAN's face also is aglow with the delight that the WAYFARER's palpable thrusts at his enemy have given him. The MAID applauds with enthusiasm, the VILLAIN perfunctorily. He regards the WAYFARER, who has collapsed into the chair L. of the table, suspiciously from under knitted brows.*

MAN. A brave drama, bravely enacted. Say you not *Master Smeaton?*

VILLAIN [*with elaborate affectation of indifference*]. 'Twould be acted passably enough, but it lacked point. [*To WAYFARER*]. However, here's for your pains.

[*He tosses the WAYFARER a coin. The latter catches it and regards it dubiously.*]

WAYFARER. Was not my song well sung, my lord?

VILLAIN. I have no fault to find with it.

WAYFARER. Then surely it ill becomes a noble lord to reward a good ballad with bad money.

[*General excitement. The VILLAIN rises angrily from his chair. Unnoticed by him, his purse slips from his knee to the floor. The MAN picks it up, and crosses with it to the back of the table.*]

VILLAIN. How now, sir? You are insolent!

[*The WAYFARER tosses the coin upon the table.*]  
WAYFARER [*above the table, C.*]. An I spoke as falsely that coin rings, then were I insolent indeed, my lord!

[*The MAID picks up the coin, and examines it.*]  
MAID [*R. of the table*]. He is right. 'Tis as false a gold as ever I clapped eyes on.

[*All eyes are turned upon the VILLAIN. He looks uneasily. The MAN works his way toward the outer door, barring possibility of egress.*]

## MASTER WAYFARER

VILLAIN [*taking the coin from the MAID*]. The devil fly away with the scoundrel who palmed it off on me!

[*He perceives his purse lying upon the table, and makes a quick movement to regain possession of it. The WAYFARER forestalls him, and empties its contents on to the boards. The coins fall with a metallic tinkle that proclaims them counterfeit. The VILLAIN endeavours to conceal his alarm behind a mask of injured innocence. He exclaims in the tone of one reluctant to admit himself defrauded.*

Are those all false, then?

[*The MAID examines the money.*

MAID. Ay, false as Judas—every one of them! How came you by them?

WAYFARER. Mayhappen I can answer that.

VILLAIN. You! How in the name of Satan——?

WAYFARER. As I tramped hitherward this afternoon, it chanced that I fell in with two other travellers bound the same way as I.

VILLAIN. Well?

WAYFARER. We talked of this and that, upon indifferent topics, till finally they told me of their quest.

VILLAIN. Which was?

WAYFARER. The discovery of a most notorious rogue, my lord, an utterer of coined money.

MAID. And they expect to find him in these parts?

WAYFARER. It would appear that they have *certain* information of him—how he has lain concealed here or hereabout for nigh a twelvemonth past.

MAID [*stereely perturbed*]. Dost hear that, John!—er—Master Beamish?

MAN [*gruffly*]. Ay, I hear.

[*The VILLAIN tries to conceal his nervousness, and to impart a casual note to his voice as he inquires :*



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

VILLAIN. Didst discover who they were—these fellow-travellers?

WAYFARER. Ay, they were Bow Street runners, both of them. I saw their warrant for the apprehension of this rogue.

VILLAIN. Their warrant! An you speak truly, then must I fly these parts at once.

*[The MAN rattles the handle of the door, and panic seizes the VILLAIN.]*

What's that?

MAN. The catch fell, that is all. Have no fear, Master Smeaton, I'm here to see that none gets in—or out.

VILLAIN *[with a sigh of relief]*. Ah!

*[The MAN settles himself more firmly against the door.]*

*[The WAYFARER laughs as though at a good jest.]*

WAYFARER. You fly, my lord! Ha, ha! A merry jest! 'Tis like you would be taken for a rogue!

VILLAIN. You do not understand. I am a refugee, a fugitive from Culloden. If they get wind of my presence here, they—— Tell me!—this swindler?—Did the runners say aught of his appearance?—how he looked, and what he wore?

WAYFARER. Nay; but I have it all set forth upon a bill they gave to me. *[He fishes in his pocket and brings forth the "Hue and Cry."]* Belike 'twill help you to identify him.

VILLAIN. Surely it will.

*[He takes it from him with trembling fingers and spreads it upon the table before him. The WAYFARER, leaning over his shoulder, reads it also.]*

WAYFARER. Egad, my lord, but this ruffian must possess a strange likeness to yourself! *[Cue for music—No. 6. Begin softly and continue throughout scene.]*

*[The VILLAIN starts nervously.]*  
"Of dainty manners and elaborate dress." None would

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deny you those two attributes. "A full colour"—such is yours. "Grey eyes"—

VILLAIN [*angrily*]. Nay, mine are green! I like not this fooling, Master Mummer.

WAYFARER. I have meant no offence, my lord, but so strange a resemblance has made me fear lest this scoundrel should be personating yourself.

MAID. Oh, that were terrible! Then might the runners apprehend you by mistake for him!

WAYFARER. There lies no cause for fear; for if that chanced then could they easily be proven wrong. ●

MAID. How so?

WAYFARER. It is set forth here that the person they are in search of possesses a triangular scar upon his forehead that he conceals beneath his wig. My lord will prove, by removing his *perruque*, that there the resemblance between him and this rascal ends.

VILLAIN [*furiously*]. I shall do no such thing!

WAYFARER. Why not, my lord?—unless so be that you are bald.

VILLAIN. I like not your humour, Master Showman. Too quick a wit leads oftentimes to the stocks!

WAYFARER [*beckoning the MAN to draw nearer*]. As too slow a one, my lord, leads oftentimes to the gallows!

*[He flicks the villain's wig from his head. The scar upon his forehead is revealed.]*

MAID. Good God!

MAN. 'Tis there!—the scar! }

*[The music swells momentarily louder. The MAID shrinks back in horror, D. S. R. The VILLAIN springs to his feet, overturning his chair. His sword leaps from its scabbard, and in that same instant his wrist is caught in a firm grip by the MAN (C.). A moment's struggle and the weapon*

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

*is wrenched from his fingers, and flung across the room. The MAID stands as one turned to stone.*

WAYFARER [*D. S. L., mockingly*]. A second Culloden, methinks, my lord! [*He picks up the fallen sword.*] I accept your token of surrender.

MAN [*to the MAID*]. Now, lass, what shall we do with him? Is he to have a run for his money?

WAYFARER. If the one be as bad as the other, methinks it will avail him little!

MAID. I care not what you do with him so be that you remember this—that he has kissed me—kissed me!

*[Shaken by sobbings of anger and injured pride, she runs from the room. The MAN gives a groan of rage.]*

MAN. You dog! Put up your fists! Put 'em up, I say VILLAIN [*agbair*]. What are you going to do?

MAN. I'm going to spoil your lips for kissing more!

VILLAIN. Nay; hand me over to the runners as you will but disfigure me not, good sir, I beg of you.

*[The WAYFARER stands with one foot on the table, the other on the chair L. of it, waving aloft the VILLAIN'S sword.]*

WAYFARER. An I had stage-managed such a scene, the villain had begged pardon on his knees.

VILLAIN. And so I will. [*He drops on to his knees.*] Go, sir, you cannot strike a man who will not lift a finger in his own defence!

MAN. You cur!

WAYFARER. He speaks truly, Master Dalesman. You cannot soil your fingers by touching pitch like that.

MAN. What's to be done with him?

WAYFARER. What does one do with refuse but fling it out of the window?

*[He steps over to the window, R., and throws it out.]*

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*The music swells. The MAN picks up the VILLAIN, struggling and protesting, in his arms, and carries him to the window, outside of which he pitches him without further ado.*

WAYFARER. A mighty cast ! . . . Egad, but he's shot clean through yonder snowdrift ! And his language ! Help me to close the window, Master Dalesman, lest our ears be contaminated ! [*He bursts into a roar of hearty laughter.*]  
'Faith, never have I taken part in so pretty a comedy !

*[The music ceases.]*

MAN. Oh, Master Showman, tell me, how comes it that a woman can be deceived by such a sorry thing as that !

*[He crosses to the bench, C., and sits.]*

WAYFARER. 'Tis women's mission in life to be deceived. An it were not, egad, we should be overrun by bachelors !

MAN. Do you not smart to think that that has kissed our Phœbe ? [*Momentarily the WAYFARER is taken aback.*]

WAYFARER. Our—— ! [*He recovers himself swiftly.*]  
Your pardon, sir. I had forgot the—— [*He recalls the phrase employed previously by the VILLAIN.*]——the Yorkshire idiom !

MAN [*stolidly insistent*]. She is your daughter !

*[There comes a pause. The WAYFARER replies with difficulty.]*

WAYFARER. I have no daughter.

MAN. It may be woman's mission in life to be deceived, good Master Showman. It is not mine. Have I not marked with what hungry eyes you have regarded her from the moment that she came into the room ? Then, too, the likeness—for she is like you—— How can you tell me that you have no daughter ?

WAYFARER [*deeply moved*]. No, no, you are mistaken, sir, I do assure you.

MAN. Nay, I am not mistaken. Phœbe and her mother

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

have not lived here all their lives as I have. They came one summer's night, no one knew whence. They bought this inn—bought it, I doubt not, with your savings that you told me of—and, ever since their coming, this little tune, strange to these parts, has haunted my ears.

*[He rises and moves L., making attempt to turn the son that the MAID was singing when the curtain rose. The WAYFARER interrupts him.]*

WAYFARER. Nay, you have it wrong. *[Cue for music—No. 6A.]* 'Tis thus that it should go.

• *[He sings the refrain once, and breaks down as he reaches the last bar.]*

MAN. And you will still tell me you are not her father you who writ that tune!

WAYFARER *[in chair R. of table]*. Master Dalesman, I am a Punch-and-Judy man.

MAN. What of it?

WAYFARER. Think you she, who believes her father to among the saints, would be rejoiced to find him resurrected thus? . . . You have no answer. . . . She dreams of perchance. Perchance she prays for me. 'Tis more to me liking, Master Dalesman, to be a sweet memory than unsavoury fact.

MAN. But this inn! 'Tis yours by right. 'Twas purchased with your money, and 'tis a fair property.

WAYFARER. And I have any claim upon it, then do I gladly surrender it to you to be your marriage portion. All I ask of you in fair exchange is this— *[He displays locket.]* Will you give it to me?

MAN. With all my heart.

WAYFARER. And some day when she shall ask of you what has become of it, mayhap you can tell her without hurting her. . . . Now, get you to Phoebe, lad, and her tears with kisses. This is the moment when you!

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get straight to her heart. God bless you, lad. Take care of her.

MAN. You are not going?

WAYFARER. Not at this moment. I would see her again—just once—before I go. [*Gue for music—No. 7.*] Tell her that.

[*The MAN goes out, L. C.*

[*The WAYFARER picks up his pack from the floor, slips its straps over his shoulder, and then, seating himself upon the settle before the fire, gazes wistfully into the flames.*

[*He sings.*

Life's a Punch-and-Judy show,  
We the puppets inside the box—  
Divers kicks and plenteous knocks,  
And pence to spur ambition.  
Fate, with his plots to be revealed,  
Stands, like the Showman, wholly concealed,  
And to his will poor Punch must yield,  
And Judy own submission!  
Fate pulls the strings.  
Poor painted things!  
What puppet dare gainsay him?  
He has sole voice.  
Their only choice  
Is straightway to obey him!  
(What a pity!)—to obey him!

[*He crosses to the window R. and, pulling aside the curtain, looks out into the night.*

Life's a Punch-and-Judy show,  
O'er the rivers, and dales and downs,  
Country roads and marketing towns,  
Old Fate, the Showman, takes us  
Once brand-new puppets, bright in youth,  
Battered, and bruised, and broken!—Forsooth,  
When worn out quite—oh, sorry truth!—  
'Tis then the Showman breaks us!

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

*[He sinks into the chair R. of the table.*

Fate cuts the strings,  
Poor broken things!—

Gently in youth so guarded—  
Now worn and old,  
Their sad tale told,  
All heartlessly discarded!  
(What a pity!)—discarded!

*[The MAID and the MAN re-enter L. C. (to gay music).  
His arms are about her, and a radiant happiness  
shines from the eyes of both of them. They come  
down L. of the table.*

MAID. John tells me that you are going, Master Wayfarer. But, on such a night as this, and after the great service you have rendered us, it must not be. There is room and to spare in the inn.

WAYFARER [R. C.]. I thank you for your kind thought of me. But I must needs press onwards. The fair opens in York the day after to-morrow, and if I am not there sometimes some other will have taken my pitch, and in vain shall I cry, "What-a-pity—What-a-pity—What-a-pity!"

MAID. Is there no service, then, that we can render you?

WAYFARER. There is a favour I would ask of you.

MAID. 'Tis granted, sir, before you ask it, and it be in my power to perform.

WAYFARER. 'Tis but a simple thing—that you will sing to me that song that—that—— *[Cue for music—No. 8.*

*[His voice breaks.*

*[The MAN comes to his rescue.*

MAN [gently]. The song your father writ.

*[The MAID looks astonished, but responds unquestioningly:*

MAID. Why—why, surely.

*[She sings, and, as the song proceeds, she is so carried*

## MASTER WAYFARER

away by its message that she forgets all about the WAYFARER, and sings only to her lover. The old man watches them with that same intense yearning in his eyes that the MAN has remarked previously. [Seeing that he is forgotten, he takes his cloak from the chair, and slips it over his arm. Noiselessly he lifts the latch of the door, and stands awhile in the opening, gazing from the pictured face in the locket to the girl who has forgotten his very existence. He lifts the locket to his lips, and then, quite suddenly, he disappears into the night.■

Hush-a-bye! Lullaby!  
Daughter of mine.  
I cannot bring to you  
Night stars ashine.  
I cannot take you  
The moon from above,  
Though you have all  
The great wealth of my love.

Hush-a-bye! Lullaby!  
Down from the moon,  
Fairies will bring  
A great gift to you soon.  
If it be love  
To your heart that would roam,  
Sweetly and tenderly  
Welcome it home.<sup>1</sup>

[The music continues through the dialogue to the fall of the curtain.

MAID [her eyes looking up into the MAN's]. Ah, my dear!

[She is about to lay her head upon his shoulder when the MAN checks her by a gesture intimating that they are not alone.

<sup>1</sup> The words of the "Lullaby" are by Douglas Farber.



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

MAID [*in a whisper*]. Oh, I had quite forgot. [*She turns about to face the WAYRABER.*] Why, where is he?

MAN [*crossing to the open door*]. We had both of us forgot. 'Twas so he wished it. He has passed out of this door and out of our lives. We shall never see the Punch-and-Judy man again. [*A pause.*] Listen!

[*Out of the darkness and from the distance comes Punch's mocking cry—"What-a-pity—What-a-pity—What-a-pity!"*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

# THE POT OF BROTH

By W. B. YEATS

## CHARACTERS

JOHN CONEILLY, *an elderly man*

SIBBY CONEILLY, *a young or middle-aged*  
*woman*

A TRAMP

W. B. YEATS—who happens to be a Doctor of Literature and of Law, as well as a Senator of the Irish Free State—is one of the most conspicuous figures in Ireland, and in 1923 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. His genius is amazingly versatile, and he has established himself as a poet, a playwright (in prose and verse), and an essayist of great charm. His "Countess Cathleen" was produced when he was twenty-seven years of age, and "The Celtic Twilight" appeared a year later. All his work is distinguished by poetic imagination and restrained emotion.

"The Pot of Broth" was the first comedy in dialect, and the author remarks concerning its earlier history: "In some country village an audience of farmers once received it in stony silence and at the fall of the curtain a farmer stood up and said that nobody there had ever seen a play. Then Mr William Fay explained what a play was, and the farmer asked that it might be performed again, and at the second performance there was much laughter and cheers."

The reader who desires to know Mr Yeats in different mood should study "Cathleen ni Hoolihan" or "The Land of Heart's Desire."

## THE POT OF BROTH<sup>1</sup>

SCENE: *A cottage kitchen. Fire on the hearth; table with cabbage, onions, a plate of meal, etc. Half-open door. A TRAMP enters, looks about.*

TRAMP. What sort are the people of this house, I wonder? Was it a good place for me to come to look for my dinner, I wonder? What's in that big pot? [*Lifts cover.*] Nothing at all! What's in the little pot? [*Lifts cover.*] Nothing at all! What's in that bottle, I wonder? [*Takes it up excitedly and tastes.*] Milk! Milk in a bottle! I wonder they wouldn't afford a tin can to milk the cow into! Not much chance for a poor man to make a living here. What's in that chest? [*Kneels and tries to lift cover.*] Locked! [*Smells at the keyhole.*] There's a good smell—there must be a still not far off.

[*Gets up and sits on chest. A noise heard outside, shouts, footsteps, and loud frightened cackling.*

TRAMP. What in the earthly world is going on outside? Anyone would think it was the Fiaunta-h-Eircann at their hunting!

MARY'S VOICE. Stop the gap, let you stop the gap, John. Stop that old schemer of a hen flying up on the thatch like as if she was an eagle!

<sup>1</sup> Applications regarding amateur performances of this play should be addressed to Messrs Samuel French, Ltd., 25 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, or 25 West 45th Street, New York.

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

JOHN'S VOICE. What can I do, Sibby? I all to bad my hand upon her when she flew away!

SIBBY'S VOICE. She's ont into the garden! Follow after her! She has the wide world before her now.

TRAMP. Sibby he called her. I wonder is it Sibby Conceely's house I am in? If that's so it's a bad chance I have of going out heavier than I came in. I often heard of her, a regular slave-driver that would starve the rats. A niggard with her eyes on kippeens, that would skin a flea for its hide! It was the bad luck of the world brought me here, and not a house or a village between this and Tubber. And it isn't much I have left to bring me on there. [*Begins emptying out his pockets on the chest.* There's my pipe and not a grain to fill it with! There's my handkerchief I got at the coronation dinner! There's my knife and nothing left of it but the handle. [*Shakes it pocket out.*] And there's a crust of the last dinner I got and the last I'm likely to get till to-morrow. That's all have in the world unless the stone I picked up to pelt at the yelping dog a while ago. [*Takes stone out of pocket and tosses it up and down.*] In the time long ago I usen't have much trouble to find a dinner, getting over the women and getting round the young ones! I remember the time I met the old minister on the path and sold him his own flock of turkeys. My wits used to fill my stomach then, but I'm afraid they're going from me now with the hardship I went through.

SIBBY'S VOICE. Catch her, she's round the bush! I your hands in the nettles, don't be daunted!

TRAMP. There's a dinner for somebody, anyway. T it may be for myself! How will I come round her wonder? There is no more pity in her heart than the

## THE POT OF BROTH

a soul in a dog. If all the saints were standing barefoot before her she'd bid them to call another day. It's myself I have to trust to now, and my share of talk. [*Looks at the stone.*] I know what I'll do, I know what the tinker did with a stone, and I'm as good a man as he is, anyway. [*He jumps up and waves the stone over his head.*] Now, Sibby! If I don't do it one way I'll do it another. My wits against the world!

"There's broth in the pot for you, old man,  
There's broth in the pot for you, old man,      ●  
    There's cabbage for me  
    And broth for you,  
And beef for Jack the journeyman.

I wish you were dead, my gay old man,  
I wish you were dead, my gay old man,  
    I wish you were dead  
    And a stone at your head,  
So as I'd marry poor Jack the journeyman."

JOHN'S VOICE [*outside*]. Bring it in, bring it in, Sibby  
You'll be late with the priest's dinner.

SIBBY'S VOICE. Can't you wait a minute till I'll draw it?  
[*Enter JOHN.*]

JOHN. I didn't know there was anyone in the house.

TRAMP. It's only this minute I came in, tired with the length of the road I am, and fasting since morning.

JOHN [*begins groping among the pots and pans*]. I'll see can I find anything here for you. . . . I don't see much . . . maybe there's something in the chest.

[*He takes key from a hiding-place at back of hearth, opens chest, takes out bottle, takes out a ham-bone, and is cutting a bit from it when SIBBY enters.*]

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

*carrying chicken by the neck. JOHN drops the  
ham-bone on a bench.*

Sissy. Hurry now, John, after all the time you have  
wasted. Why didn't you steal up on the old hen that time  
she was scratching in the dust?

JOHN. Sure I thought one of the chickens would be the  
tenderest.

Sissy. Cock you up with tenderness! All the expense  
I'm put to! My grand hen I've been feeding these five  
years! Wouldn't that have been enough to part with!  
Indeed I wouldn't have thought of parting with her hull,  
but she had got tired of laying since Easter.

JOHN. Well, I thought we ought to give his Reverence  
something that would have a little good in it.

Sissy. What does the age of it matter? A hen's a hen  
when it's on the table. *[Sitting down to pluck chicken]*  
Why couldn't the Kernans have given the priest his dinner  
the way they always do? What did it matter their mother's  
brother to have died? It is an excuse they had made up  
to put the expense of the dinner on me.

JOHN. Well, I hope you have a good bit of bacon to put  
in the pot along with the chicken.

Sissy. Let me alone. The taste of meat on the table is  
all that high-up people like the clergy care for, nice genteel  
people, no way greedy like potato-diggers or harvest-men.

JOHN. Well, I never saw the man, gentle or simple,  
wouldn't be glad of his fill of bacon and he hungry.

Sissy. Let me alone, I'll show the Kernans what I can  
do. I have what is better than bacon, a nice bit of a ham  
I am keeping in the chest this good while, thinking we may  
want it for company *[She catches sight of TRAMP and  
exit.]* Who is there? A beggar-man is it? Then  
out this house if you please. We have nothing  
*[She gets up and opens the door.]*

## THE POT OF BROTH

TRAMP [*comes forward*]. It is a mistake you are making, ma'am, it is not asking anything I am. It is giving I am more used to. I was never in a house yet, but there would be a welcome for me in it again.

SIBBY. Well, you have the appearance of a beggar, and if it isn't begging you are what way do you make your living?

TRAMP. If I was a beggar, ma'am, it is to common people I would be going and not to a nice grand woman like yourself, that is only used to be talking with high-up noble people.

SIBBY. Well, what is it you are asking? If it's a bit to eat you want, I can't give it to you, for I have company coming that will clear all before them.

TRAMP. Is it me ask anything to eat? [*Holds up stone.*] I have here whist is better than beef and mutton, and currant cokes and sacks of flour.

SIBBY. What is it at all?

TRAMP [*mysteriously*]. Those that gave it to me wouldn't like me to tell that.

SIBBY [*to JOHN*]. Do you think is he a man that has friends among the Sidhe?

JOHN. Your mind is always running on the Sidhe since the time they made John Molloy find buried gold on the bridge of Limerick. I see nothing in it but a stone.

TRAMP. What can you see in it, you that never saw what it can do?

JOHN. What is it it can do?

TRAMP. It can do many things, and whist it's going to do now is to make me a drop of broth for my dinner.

SIBBY. I'd like to have a stone that could make broth.

TRAMP. No one in the world but myself has one, ma'am, and no other stone in the world has the same power, for it has enchantment on it. All I'll ask of you now, ma'am, is the loan of a pot with a drop of boiling water in it.



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

SIBBY. You're welcome to that much. John, fill the small pot with water. - *[John fills the pot from a kettle.]*

TRAMP *[putting in stone]*. There now, that's all I have to do but to put it on the fire to boil, and it's a grand pot of broth will be before me then.

SIBBY. And is that all you have to put in it?

TRAMP. Nothing at all but that—only, maybe, a bit of an herb for fear the enchantment might slip away from it. You wouldn't have a bit of Sianlus in the house, ma'am, that was cut with a black-handled knife?

SIBBY. No, indeed, I have none of that in the house.

TRAMP. Or a bit of the Fearavan that was picked when the wind was from the north?

SIBBY. No, indeed, I'm sorry there's none.

TRAMP. Or a sprig of the Athair-talay, the father of herbs?

JOHN. There's plenty of it by the hedge. I'll go out and get it for you.

TRAMP. Oh, don't mind taking so much trouble; those leaves beside me will do well enough.

*[He takes a couple of good handfuls of the cabbage and onions and puts them in.]*

SIBBY. But where at all did you get the stone?

TRAMP. Well, it is how it happened. I was out one time, and a grand greyhound with me, and it followed a hare, and I went after it. And I came up at last to the edge of a gravel-pit where there were a few withered furze-bushes, and there was my fine hound sitting up, and it shivering, and a little old man sitting before him, and he taking off a hare-skin coat. *[Looking round at the ham-bone]* Give me the loan of a kippeen to stir the pot with. . . .

*[He takes the ham-bone and puts it into the pot.]*

JOHN. Oh! the ham-bone!

TRAMP. I didn't say a ham-bone, I said a hare-skin coat.

SIBBY. Hold your tongue, John, if it's deaf you are getting.

## THE POT OF BROTH

TRAMP [*stirring the pot with the ham-bone*]. Well, as I was telling you he was sitting up, and one time I thought he was as small as a nut, and the next minute I thought his head to be in the stars. Frightened I was.

MISSY. No wonder, no wonder at all in that.

TRAMP. He took the little stone then—that stone I have with me—out of the side pocket of his coat, and he showed it to me. "Call off your dog," says he, "and I'll give you that stone, and if ever you want a good drop of broth or a bit of stirabout, or a drop of poteen itself, all you have to do is to put it down in a pot with a drop of water and stir it awhile, and you'll have the thing you were wanting ready before you."

MISSY. Poteen! Would it make that?

TRAMP. It would, ma'am; and wine, the same as the Clare Militia uses.

MISSY. Let me see what does it look like now. [*Is bending forward.*]

TRAMP. Don't look at it for your life, ma'am. It might bring bad luck on anyone that would look at it, and it boiling. I must put a cover on the pot, or I must colour the water some way. Give me a handful of that meal.

[*MISSY holds out a plate of meal and he puts in a handful or two.*]

JOHN. Well, he is a gilded man!

MISSY. It would be a great comfort to have a stone like that.

[*She has finished plucking the chicken, which lies in her lap.*]

TRAMP. And there's another thing it does, ma'am, since it came into Catholic hands. If you put it into a pot of a Friday with a bit of the whitest meat in Ireland in it, it would turn it as black as black.

MISSY. That is no less than a miracle. I must tell Father John about that.

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

SIBBY. You're welcome to that much. John, fill the small pot with water. . . . [JOHN fills the pot from a bucket.]

TRAMP [putting in stone]. There now, that's all I have to do but to put it on the fire to boil, and it's a grand pot of broth will be before me then.

SIBBY. And is that all you have to put in it?

TRAMP. Nothing at all but that—only, maybe, a bit of an herb for fear the enchantment might slip away from it. You wouldn't have a bit of Slanlus in the house, ma'am, that was cut with a black-handled knife?

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[He takes a couple of good handfuls of the cabbage and onions and puts them in.]

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TRAMP. Well, it is how it happened. I was out one time, and a grand greyhound with me, and it followed a hare, and I went after it. And I came up at last to the edge of a graveyard where there were a few withered larch-trees, my fine hound sitting up, and it showed a man sitting before him, and he taking out a . . . [He looks round at the ham bone] (Give me the ham bone to stir the pot with. . . .)

. . . . [He takes the ham bone and puts it into the pot.]

[He looks round, and then he says to himself] (Now, I can't have done it wrong, I know, if it's dead you are getting)

## THE POT OF BROTH

TRAMP [*stirring the pot with the ham-bone*]. Well, as I was telling you he was sitting up, and one time I thought he was as small as a nut, and the next minute I thought his head to be in the stars. Frightened I was.

MARY. No wonder, no wonder at all in that.

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MARY. Poteen! Would it make that?

TRAMP. It would, ma'am; and wine, the same as the Clare Militia uses.

MARY. Let me see what does it look like now. [*Is bending forward.*]

TRAMP. Don't look at it for your life, ma'am. It might bring bad luck on anyone that would look at it, and it boiling. I must put a cover on the pot, or I must colour the water some way. Give me a handful of that meal.

[*MARY holds out a plate of meal and he puts in a handful or two.*]

JOHN. Well, he is a gifted man!

MARY. It would be a great comfort to have a stone like that.

[*She has finished plucking the chicken, which lies in her lap.*]

TRAMP. And there's another thing it does, ma'am, since it came into Catholic hands. If you put it into a pot of a Friday with a bit of the whitest meat in Ireland in it, it would turn it as black as black.

MARY. That is no less than a miracle. I must tell Father John about that.

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

TRAMP. But to put a bit of meat with it any other day of the week, it would do it no harm at all, but good. Look here now, ma'am, I'll put that nice little hen you have in your lap in the pot for a minute till you'll see. [*Takes it and puts it in.*]

JOHN [*sarcastically*]. It's a good job this is not a Friday!

MISSY. Keep yourself quiet, John, and don't be interrupting the talk or you'll get a knock on the head like the King of Lochlann's grandmother.

JOHN. Go on, go on, I'll say no more.

TRAMP. If I'm passing this way some time of a Friday, I'll bring a nice bit of mutton, or the breast of a turkey, and you'll see how it will be no better in two minutes than a fistful of bog mould.

MISSY [*getting up*]. Let me take the chicken out now.

TRAMP. Stop till I'll help you, ma'am, you might scald your hand. I'll show it to you in a minute as white as your own skin, where the lily and the rose are fighting for mastery. Did you ever hear what the boys in your own parish were singing after you being married from them—such of them that had any voice at all and not choked with crying, or senseless with the drop of drink they took to comfort them and to keep their wits from going, with the loss of you?

[MISSY sits down again complacently]

MISSY. Did they do that indeed?

TRAMP. They did, ma'am, this is what they used to be singing :

“Philomel, I've listened oft  
To thy lay, near weeping willow”—

No, that's not it—it's a queer thing the memory is—

“'Twas at the dance at Dermody's that first I caught  
a sight of her.”

No, that's not it either—ah, now I have it.

## THE POT OF BROTH

"My pretty Paistin is my heart's desire,  
Yet I am shrunken to skin and bone."

SIBBY. Why would they call me Paistin?

TRAMP. And why wouldn't they? Would you wish them to put your right name in a song, and your man ready to knock the brains of any man will as much as look your side of the road?

SIBBY. Well, maybe so.

TRAMP. I was standing by the man that made the song, and he writing it with an old bit of a carpenter's pencil, and the tears running down—

"My pretty Paistin is my heart's desire,  
Yet am I shrunken to skin and bone  
For all my toil has had for its hire  
Is drinking her health when lone, alone"—

[SIBBY takes a fork and rises to take out the chicken  
TRAMP puts his hand to stop her and goes on.

"Oh I would think that I had my fee,  
Though I am shrunken to bone and skin,  
Could I but drink, my love on my knee,  
Between two barrels at the inn."

[SIBBY half rises again. TRAMP puts his hand upon her hand.

TRAMP. Wait now till you hear the end [sings]:

"Nine nights I lay in longing sore  
Between two bushes under the rain;  
Thinking to meet my love once more  
I cried and whistled but vain, all vain."

[He repeats the verse, SIBBY singing too and beating time with fork.

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

NEERY (*to JOHN*). I always knew I was too good for you!

[*She goes on humming.*]

JOHN. Well, he has the poor woman bewitched.

NEERY [*collectedly coming to her wits*]. Did you take the chicken out yet?

TRAMP [*taking it out and giving it a good squeeze into the pot*]. I did, ma'am. Look at it there.

[*He takes it and lays on table.*]

JOHN. How is the broth getting on?

TRAMP [*tasting it with a spoon*]. It's grand. It's always grand.

NEERY. Give me a taste of it.

TRAMP [*takes the pot off and slips the ham-bone behind him*]. Give me some vessel till I'll give this sky-woman a taste of it.

[*JOHN gives him an egg-cup, which he fills and gives to NEERY. JOHN gives him a mug, and he fills this for himself, pouring it back and forward from the mug to a bowl that is on the table, and drinking gulps now and again. NEERY blinks at him and smells it.*]

NEERY. There's a good smell on it, anyway. [*Tasting*] It's lovely. Oh, I'd give the world and all to have the stone that made that!

TRAMP. The world and all wouldn't buy it, ma'am. If I was inclined to sell it the Lord-Lieutenant would have given me Dublin Castle and all that's in it long ago.

NEERY. Oh, couldn't we coax it out of you any way at all?

TRAMP [*drinking more soup*]. The whole world wouldn't coax it out of me except maybe for one thing . . . [*looks depressed*]. Now I think of it there's only one reason I might think of parting it at all.

NEERY [*eagerly*]. What reason is that?

TRAMP. It's a misfortune that overtakes me, ma'am, every

## THE POT OF BROTH

time I make an attempt to keep a pot of my own to boil it in, and I don't like to be always under a compliment to the neighbours, asking the loan of one. But whatever way it is, I never can keep a pot with me. I had a right to ask one of the little man that gave me the stooe. The last one I bought got the bottom burned out of it one night I was giving a hand to a friend that keeps a stall, and the one before that I hid under a bush one time I was going into Ennis for the night, and some boys in the town dreamed about it and went looking for treasure in it, and they found nothing but eggshells, but they brought it away for all that. And another one. . . .

MARY. Give me the loan of the stone itself, and I'll engage I'll keep a pot for it. . . . Wait now till I'll make some offer to you. . . .

TRAMP [*aside*]. I'd best not be stopping to bargain, the priest might be coming in on me. [*Gets up.*] Well, ma'am, I'm sorry I can't oblige you. [*Goes to door, shades his eyes and looks out, turns suddenly.*] I have no time to lose, ma'am, I'm off. [*Comes to table and takes his hat.*] Well, ma'am, what offer will you make?

JOHN. You might as well leave it for a day on trial first.

TRAMP [*to JOHN*]. I think it likely I'll not be passing this way agin. [*To MARY*] Well, now, ma'am, as you were so kind, and for the sake of the good treatment you gave me I'll ask nothing at all for it. Here it is for you and welcome, and that you may live long to use it. But I'll just take a little bit in my bag that'll do for my supper, for fear I mightn't be in Tubber before night. [*He takes up the chicken.*] And you won't begrudge me a drop of whisky when you can make plenty for yourself from this out.

[*Takes the bottle.*]

JOHN. You deserve it, you deserve it indeed. You are a very pified man. Don't forget the kippen!



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

TRAMP. It's here!

[Slaps his pocket and exit. JOHN follows him.]

SISBY [looking at the stone in her hand]. Broth of the best, stirabout, poteen, wine itself, he said! And the people that will be coming to see the miracle! I'll be as rich as Biddy Early before I die! [JOHN comes back.]

SISBY. Where were you, John?

JOHN. I just went out to shake him by the hand. He's a very gifted man.

SISBY. He is so indeed.

JOHN. And the priest's at the top of the breen coming for his dinner. Maybe you'd best put the stone in the pot again.

CURTAIN

# A KING'S HARD BARGAIN

## A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By LIEUT.-COLONEL W. P. DUNN, C.B.E.

### CHARACTERS

*In the garden :*

HARRY QUICK, *Leading Signaller, R.N.*  
JOSEPH PAGETT, *Reservist, Royal Marines*  
MRS PAGETT, *his wife*

*In the watertight compartment :*

"PINCHER" MARTIN, *Ordinary seaman, R.N.*  
WILLIAM WIX } *Privates, Royal Marines*  
ALBERT SKILLITOE }

SCENES I and III. *The garden of the "Coach and Horses."*

SCENE II. *A watertight compartment of H M S.  
"Belligerent."*

TIME. *A summer evening. Present day.*

This play was produced at the Court Theatre,  
London, November 7, 1908, with the following cast :

*In the garden :*

Harry Quick . . . MR FREDERICK VOLPE  
Joseph Pagett . . . MR LOUIS CALVERT  
Mrs Pagett . . . MISS MARY BROUGH

*In the watertight compartment :*

"Pincher" Martin . . MR ORLANDO BARNETT  
William Wix . . . MR CLARENCE DREWENT  
Albert Skillitoe . . . MR PHILIP KNOX

LIEUT.-COL. W. P. DAUNT (of the Royal Marines) has had an adventurous life, and naturally most of his books deal with the sea. Among his stories may be mentioned "The Passing of the Flagship," "The Shadow on the Quarter Deck," and "Men-at-Arms," while his best-known plays include "H.M.S. Missfire," "The Figurehead," "The Admiral Speaks," and "The Flag Lieutenant," the last being done in collaboration with Leo Trevor. In very different vein is "A Privy Council," which was written in collaboration with Richard Pryce. It is an excellent one-act play suggested by an amusing incident in *Pepys' Diary*.

# A KING'S HARD BARGAIN<sup>1</sup>

SCENE I: *The garden of the "Coach and Horses."* Enter QUICK up C. He raps on the table with an empty pewter  
MRS PAGETT enters from inn R.

QUICK. Good evenin', missis. No need to ask "'Ow are you?" with them Devonshire roses a-bloomin' in your pretty face.

MRS PAGETT. Trust a sailor for something of that sort! Good evenin', Mr Signalman; I do declare this must be a case of telepathy.

QUICK (*lighting his pipe*). Tell 'ow much?

MRS PAGETT. Telepathy. You're the very man I've been dyin' to see all the afternoon.

QUICK. And I've been dyin' all the afternoon to get 'ere. A drop o' Scotch, if you'll be so kind, missis. You weren't dyin' simply to give me that, though—I'll lay to it.

MRS PAGETT. P'r'aps not—though 'eaven knows customers are welcome enough 'pon Dartymoor. No, I wanted to learn the meanin' o' them tall sticks you and your mates have set up 'pon ter yonder.

QUICK (*turning towards them*). Well, that's done in three words. They're wireless telegraph masts.

MRS PAGETT. Them Maccaroni masts they tell off?

<sup>1</sup> Applications regarding amateur performances of this play should be addressed to Messrs Samuel French, Ltd., 25 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W C 2, or 23 West 43rd Street, New York

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

QUICK. That's it, though we gen'rally call 'em Marconi for short.

MRS PAGETT. But what do a pack o' sailors want with 'pon Dartymoor?

QUICK. They don't want it. They've got to 'ave it. The Naval manœuvres are on, as you may 'ave 'eard, and the Admiralty are experimentin' in wireless with the 'Ome Fleet at sea. They're thinkin' of establishin' a station 'ere.

MRS PAGETT. The 'Ome Fleet! 'Ow far off might that be?

QUICK. Pretty nigh the middle o' the bloomin' Atlantic.

MRS PAGETT. Middle o' the Atlantic! Well, I don't 'old with it—tamperin' with the power o' the Omnipotent! You mark my words, a judgment'll fall on them who does it.

QUICK. Well, well, there'll be a judgment on all of 'em some day. *[His eye catches the name on the signboard.]* "Joseph Pagett—Joseph Pagett!" Now, I wonder—

MRS PAGETT. Where my husband is! Then I'll tell you. He's been in to Plymouth Barracks for his annual training and I expect him back every minute.

QUICK *[thoughtfully]*. He's a Reservist of the Marines, ain't he? As a matter o' fact, I was wondering if I ever served aboard the *Andrew Marsh* in China.

MRS PAGETT. "Andromasher" they pronounce it, but it's a French name. But what if he has?

QUICK *[with a grin]*. If he's the same Private Pagett who borrowed three 'alf-crowns off me, and misremembers to return 'em, I should like to meet him again, that's all!

MRS PAGETT *[frigidly]*. Then if you expect to meet him here you'll be disappointed. My Joseph—*[singing]*—happens to be the model licenced victualler and every Brewster Seamon, and a churchwarden appointed by the Bishop of the Diocese. So there!



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MRS PAGETT *[frigidly]*. Then if you expect to meet him here you'll be disappointed. My Joseph—*[voice rising]*—happens to be the model licensed victualler at every Brewster Sessions, and a churchwarden's thought of by the Bishop of the Diocese. So there!

QUICK. Then of course they couldn't be the same.

MRS PAGETT. I'm glad to see that— [Turns to take off tray into the house, and sees PAGETT off L.] But, talking of heroes, here he comes.

[Enter PAGETT in blue serge tunic, dusty, hot, and irritable, up C. MRS PAGETT, having dropped the tray in the porch, runs to meet him.]

Well, 'ow are you?

PAGETT. 'Ot and tired! Give us a kiss, missis—there!—and a drink!

MRS PAGETT. Shandygaff as usual, Joe?

PAGETT. As usual, my dear. [Unbuckles belt, and bangs it on nail beside porch L.] As usual. [Exit MRS PAGETT, R.]

QUICK [aside]. If it ain't Joe Pagett of the *Andreto Mash* it's his twin brother with the same tally. [Aloud] Too 'aughty now, I suppose, Mr Churchwarden—[PAGETT turns suddenly]—to recognize an old shipmate.

PAGETT. What? 'Arry? A leading signalman, too! [Shakes hands.] 'Owever did they come to make you a petty officer?

QUICK [pointedly]. After the *Andreto Mash* paid off, and I was no longer 'andicapped by evil companions, I 'ad a chance of risin' in my profession.

[Both come well down stage with their backs to the inn.]

PAGETT. Lord love us! What wonders men see who go down to the deep in first-class cruisers! To think that the Ordinary Seaman as I used to go ashore with on general leave in Yokohama— [Nudging him and twinkling] D'you mind the Hundred an' One Steps at Yokohama, 'Arry!

[Unperceived by the pair, enter MRS PAGETT from inn R. with whisky in glass and tankard of shandygaff.]

QUICK [gloomily]. I mind, and how you used to kiss Otalisan behind the bloomin' temple.



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

PAGETT [*with a smirk*]. It wasn't my fault if she preferred the British Army.

QUICK. They're all alike. A simple sailor man ain't in it, when a soldier's about in his red coat and 'elmet. You 'ad to keep the Moosmie gals off with a stick!

PAGETT [*shuckling*]. Not me—I liked it! They used to sing about me, bless 'em, like flies round a honey-pot.

MRS PAGETT. Did they?! Any'ow, we'll drop the subject for the present. But—to-night, Joe!

QUICK [*grinning*]. To-night, Joe.

PAGETT. See what you've done, with your silly sailor talk of temples and what all. [*Organ heard off.*] Hallo! This ain't choir practice night, surely?

MRS PAGETT. No. But to-morrow's *Lifeboat Sunday*, so there's a special practice this evening to run through the sea hymns. They're so seldom sang, you know.

PAGETT. Same old yarn. "Out of sight, out of mind" with the Navy.

MRS PAGETT. More's the shame, as I was just saying to Loveday Yeo.

PAGETT. The maid's been here, then?

MRS PAGETT. Yes, to give me a bit of news on her way to the practice. She's going to be married, Joe.

PAGETT. Who's the 'appy bridegroom select?

MRS PAGETT. He's a private serving aboard the *Belligerent*.

QUICK. The *Belligerent*? Why, she's one o' the 'Ome fleet off the Azores yonder. What's his tally?

MRS PAGETT. Albert Shillitoe!

PAGETT. Orlbet Shillitoe!

MRS PAGETT. D'you know him, then?

PAGETT. Know him! Look 'ere, I don't say as I wish him any positive 'arm, mind you. But—I'd like to see him paralysed all down his right side.

QUICK. You weren't exac'ly chums then, I reckon?

JO

## A KING'S HARD BARGAIN

PAGETT. Chums! Is it likely you'd be chums with a lop-eared leper what's continually guessin' your most secret thoughts what you don't even tell the missis?

QUICK [*to MRS PAGETT*]. Telepathy runs in the family, seemin'ly.

PAGETT [*suspiciously*]. I don't know what you mean by that, though you've got its scientific tally right enough. Telepathy's what they call it.

QUICK [*to MRS PAGETT*]. Sort o' wireless tele-graphy, between two parties, I s'pose?

MRS PAGETT. That's it. Thought readin', to put it plainly.

PAGETT. You may put it any way you've a mind to. An exasperatin' phenomeno's the way I puts it.

QUICK. 'Ow do you mean?

PAGETT. Why, when we was thousands o' miles apart on different stations, I've dreamt that I've seen him—as nat'ral as it might be you now—sometimes in liquor, but gen'rally in cells——

QUICK. 'Ere, don't you go comparin' me with 'im!

PAGETT [*waving him aside*]. On the other 'and, he would dream, quite as nat'ral, that he saw me doin' some galliant and 'eroic deed. [*Putting quick with his forefinger*] When we come to compare dates afterwards, we used to find our respectful dreams 'ad been true! What's the meanin' of it all?

QUICK. Birds of a feather gen'rally——

PAGETT. Thank you for the insinooation, Mister 'Arry Quick, Har N. He was the worst King's 'Ard Bargain in a ship that was manned with 'em!

MRS PAGETT. A King's 'Ard Bargain?

QUICK. A man that takes the King's pay, missis, but shirks the King's job.

MRS PAGETT. I haven't been on the married strength for

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

nigh on twenty years without knowin' that, Mr Quick. *[Going up towards inn]* But, from all Loveday told me, it don't apply to Orlbett Shillitoe, that's all!

PAGETT. You don't know him as well as what I do, my dear.

MRS PAGETT. You're prejudiced by that there telepathy, Joe. P'r'aps he hasn't had his chance yet. I shouldn't wonder, in spite o' you both, if Loveday's promised husband didn't turn out to be a hero some day. *[Exit into inn.]*

QUICK. Lord love 'em! They think everything in a red coat must be a hero. *[Going up stage.]*

PAGETT *[indignantly]*. From King to drummer, a man never knows where he is with the female sect.

QUICK. Hallo! My mates are signallin' to me. *[Stares with shaded eyes, then through telescope at signal station off L.]* "In-touch-with-Flagship-important." I must be off!

*[He closes glass with a snap and rushes off L.]*

PAGETT *[yawning]*. The Adm'ral wants some more white paint and gold-leaf sent out to him, I s'pose. What about supper, missis?

MRS PAGETT *[returning]*. I'm going to see about it now.

*[PAGETT coming down stage, hums: "A life on the ocean wave, a home on the rolling deep—"]*

MRS PAGETT *[as she goes towards inn]*. Afterwards you and I will have a little talk, Joe.

PAGETT. Eh? *[Humming]* "Where the——"

MRS PAGETT *[from porch]*. About the *Andromastes*, Joe.

PAGETT. Oh! *[Humming]* "And the winds their vigil keep."

MRS PAGETT. And Japanese templets, *Joseph!* *[Exit.]*

PAGETT *[with a groan, as he throws himself down on bench]*. To-night of all nights! When I'm too dog tired to invent airy-tales for her! Heigh-ho!

## A KING'S HARD BARGAIN

SCENE II: He yawns, stretches himself, and settles down to sleep. In the distance the organ is swelling out the sea hymn, "Fierce raged the tempest," and the church clock solemnly chimes the four quarters. As soon as FACIET is asleep the stage is gradually darkened, until the scene is entirely blacked out. A front gauze is dropped, and the watertight compartment lowered from the flies. It is a boxed-in set, with a practicable watertight door K and L. In the centre is a large steel rack filled with the women's canvasbags. On each bulkhead is an electric light, and a coffee-drum is painted along all three sides of the compartment. The overhead deck is intersected by steel girders, the bulkheads by T-irons, and all are studded with steel bolts. The entire set is made of canvas stretched on battens, the above details being painted thereon. The rack, which is neatly packed with actual bags, is constructed of wood, and is lowered from the flies.

Meanwhile the distant murmur of the village gradually changes to the busy sounds of a man-of-war. The muffled thunder of the organ merges into the hum and thrub of the dynamo. The decaying chimes are followed by eight staccato strokes in sea fashion upon the ship's bell. The lights are gradually raised, the stage to be fully illuminated as eight bells are struck. From the two overhead are heard—slightly muffled—the gape and hoarse call of a boat's mate: "Clear ay decks!" There is a rust of feet, the noise of ropes being fove down on the decks, and the sea crew of "Aft all the Marines! Come, beat a band there. Come gun!" etc., etc.

WILLIAM is discovered asleep on the deck K. With, who is on watch, is slowly pacing backward and forth side on front. The former is in a blue serge suit, which is unlatched and shows his grey fawn shirt. His cap is lying beside

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF "TODAY"

him. The serje is *staring* dressed in a blue serge, webbing waist-belt and bayonet, and serge cap with a white top. Enter MARTIN L. He is in a white working suit of duck, is *haggard*, and wears a white cap cover.

WIX [*balancing his cap on his face*]. It's crool 'ot!

MARTIN [*doing duty*]. I b'lieve yer. [*Indicating SHILLITOE*]  
Is yonder a serjean' sallymender that's picked out this pit  
o' Tophet for a sleeping berth?

WIX [*grinning*]. It's been picked out for him, and bloomin' well serve him right. He's a prisoner under my charge at present; to-morrow he goes into cells.

MARTIN. Who is he?

WIX. Number one ought four seven Private Oilbert Shillitoe.

MARTIN. What's the pore feller's crime?

WIX. Sleepin' on his post with his toonie for a pillow, and 'anging his boots on the 'andle of the Captain's cabin door!

MARTIN. Cells for that! I wonder what he'd 'ave got if he'd hung himself on the sacred 'andle.

[*The pipe and hoarse call of a bo's'n's mate are heard above, followed by the hooting of a fog-horn along the decks, the rush of many feet, and the stud closing doors.* SHILLITOE *runs up*, and all the listen to these sounds, which in the compartments are somewhat muffled.

SHILLITOE. It's "Close watertight doors!"

MARTIN. Why not? It's the routine. It's got to be done once in every watch.

IX. That's right enough. But what did they want with 'em for? They closed 'em not more than 'al-

o.

SHILLITOE. To worry the 'ands, most like. That's what the 'ands are made.

## A KING'S HARD BARGAIN

*[Three or four hands—supers—race through the compartment, banging to and clipping the doors behind them. They pass behind the bag rack, and consequently fail to see the three men who are in front.]*

MARTIN *[pulling a bag out of the rack and sitting down on it]*. That's a little bit of orl right. I couldn't join the working party now, not if I wanted to ever so.

WIX. Oh, that's your little game, is it? Well, you'll find there's one sentry in the Royal Marines, any'ow, as don't shirk his dooty.

MARTIN. 'Ow d'you mean?

WIX. I'll report you after the evolution, my son, to the sergeant o' the guard, for skulkin' from your work and bein' in an onlawful place.

MARTIN. Oh, you will, will you? *[Turning back the sleeves of his jumper]* Then I'll 'ave full value for my money by layin' out a sentry first.

*[He begins to spar at wix, when a dull shock is heard, and the three men are thrown off their feet.]*

SHILLITOE *[rubbing himself]*. She's took the ground!

MARTIN *[boarsely]*. She's in collision! It's no drill this time, chums. The sooner we're out o' this rat-trap—*[springing to his feet]*—the better it'll be for our gracious King and country. . . .

SHILLITOE. Back with them chips, lads. There ain't no time to lose.

*[They rush to doors, WIX R., SHILLITOE and MARTIN L., and try to force back steel clips which hold them.]*

WIX *[nervously]*. I can't move mine the least part of an inch.

SHILLITOE *[with desperation]*. Damnation! No more can't we!

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

IN [*desisting in despair*]. Nor won't neither, nor if to try till Judgment Day.

[*irritably*]. You've been bloomin' cocksure, and wrong, before to-day, "Pincher."

FIN. The ship's begun to list already, and when 'eavy doors like these get thrown out o' the perpendicular—

Oh, my Gawd, 'ark to that!

[*A sound of grinding and rending metal and of rushing water is heard. Panicstricken, they batter on doors and shout for help.*

Outside, there! Bear a hand! Open these bloomin' , can't you?

ARTH. There'll be trouble over this, if ever we get out. One's made the First Lootenant's paint-work all bloody his knuckles.

MILLER [*with a laugh*]. We needn't worry. The First enant 'll never set eyes on this bit o' paint-work no

ARTH. Nor on us, for that matter, not if he lives to be hundred.

IX. 'Ese, let's all 'ave a go at this door.

[*They shout and hammer with renewed frenzy.*

MILLER [*flinging away from the door*]. What the blazes be good of it all? There's no one in either of the next apartments, and we can't be 'eard on deck.

MARTIN. They're too busy gettin' out the collision mat one thing.

MILLER [*hopelessly*]. Besides, who supposes we're here? 'e chaps who closed the doors didn't see us. They'd sort the flats all clear.

WIX. She's listing more 'eavily every moment.

[*Three or four bags slip from the rack, which meanwhile has been slightly tilted forward by stage hands behind it.*

## A KING'S HARD BARGAIN

WIX [*beating his hands upon the door*]. If only I was up there with the rest of 'em in the blessed air an' sunlight, I could face it like a man. [*He breaks down.*]

SHILLITOE [*placing hand on his shoulder*]. It'll soon be over, lad—Gawd—there goes the light!

[*Darken stage. Hum of dynamo stops—two or three dull explosions heard off, bags slip from rack, sound of shuffling and skidding of feet on sharply canted deck.*]

MARTIN. Lord 'ave mercy upon us! She's goin' down!

[*After a few seconds of darkness and silence, during which PAGETT is for a brief instant seen still asleep outside the inn, a match is struck—lights on slightly—revealing startled face of SHILLITOE. He gropes about for fallen emergency lantern, finds it, and lights its great candle—lights half up, limelight on group—SHILLITOE holds lantern aloft, discovering prostrate forms of WIX and MARTIN, all the bags strewn on the deck, and various other indications that the ship is on sea bed.*]

SHILLITOE [*in a hoarse whisper*]. Is—is anyone else—alive?

MARTIN [*weakly*]. Alive! Saints in 'eaven, I'd be 'appy if I was bein' drowned up topsides with the rest o' the ship's comp'ny!

WIX [*solemnly*]. It's a judgment on you, chum, for skulkin' where you didn't ought.

MARTIN. It's a crool 'ard judgment for a crime as would have got me seven days to A at most.

WIX [*hysterically*]. Don't say there's no 'ope, chums! I'm only a recruity—it ain't fair that I should be a casualty so young. Surely our Admiral ain't the sort to steam away and leave three pore seamen an' Marines alive at the bottom o' the sea! [*Pause; frantically, at receiving no response*] You're the sailorman, "Pincher," you know what'd happen.



## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

They'll send down divers to get us out, won't they, "Pincher," chum?

MARTIN [*very quietly*]. My pore lad, as well make up your mind to face it first as last. All the seamanship in the Navy could no more 'elp us than what a infants' school could.

[WIX covers his face with his hands, and sobs quietly.

SHILLITOE [*with forced gaiety to MARTIN*]. 'Ow long, Mr "Pincher" Know-all, Es-quire, do you calc'late the air in this 'igh-class mausoleum will last us?

MARTIN [*moodily*]. It's a simple enough sum in cubic measure and rule o' three. As he'll never know of it, pore feller, I'll do it on the First Lieutenant's paint-work.

[*He writes with pencil on watertight door.*

WIX [*after a pause*]. 'Ow does it work out, chum?

MARTIN. With only three of us to ex'aust the air in this 'ermetically closed compartment, I figger it that we may linger the best part of five hours before we—before—

[*All cough nervously.*

And that 'alf-inch o' pusser's dip in the lantern is good for ten minutes at the outside!

WIX. Ten minutes subtracted from four hours leaves—

SHILLITOE [*fiercely*]. An eternity of 'ell! For the Lord's sake, let's overhaul the bags—there's bound to be a pack o' cards in one o' them. If we don't do something we shall go mad!

WIX. Even if we found any, I, for one, shouldn't 'ave the heart to play. Come to think of it, 'twould be more fitting if we prayed.

MARTIN. That's right enoogh. But who knows the detail?

SHILLITOE. Pity the Chapl'in ain't 'ere, he's a fair master-piece at it!

MARTIN. I see him pass through on his way to the sick ward before they closed watertight doors.

## A KING'S HARD BARGAIN

SHILLITOE. Crool 'ard, sin't it, that he should have missed bein' with us by about 'alf a minute!

WIX [*nervously*]. In loo of the parson, chums, I can mind a bit o' that routine prayer what's read ev'ry mornin' on the quarter-deck.

MARTIN. It can't do us no 'arm to 'ear it. It's for the last time of askin', as the sayin' is.

*[There is a moment's pause.]*

SHILLITOE [*crossing to wix, and laying his hand on his shoulder*]. Carry on, chum.

WIX [*kneeling on bags*]. "Preserve us from the dangers o' the sea and from the violence o' the enemy; that we may be a safeguard unto our most gracious Sovereign Lord the King and his dominions, and a security for such as pass on the seas upon their lawful occasions."

ALL. Amen!

MARTIN. Teh! I reckon we've done with all that now. A prayer for the dyin' 'ud be more suitable-like.

SHILLITOE. Would it? None of us, I'll lay to it, did much in the praying line while Death was out of sight to le'ward. Now that he's got the weather gauge it seems a bit pitiful to whine to the Almighty about it.

MARTIN [*thoughtfully*]. It oever struck me that way before.

SHILLITOE. We've each got womenfolk at 'ome, Gawd 'elp 'em! When they hear of this 'ere casualty, depend upon it they'll make out a better case for us than we've the wits to do for ourselves.

MARTIN. Aye, it comes nar'ral to a woman, don't it, to tell pretty fairy-tales about a—man she's fond of.

*[A moment's silence, emphasized by the quiet sobbing of wix.]*

SHILLITOE [*suddenly springing to his feet*]. Lord, to think that I'd nearly forgot it!

MARTIN and WIX. What?

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

SHILLITOE. Shipmates, I've a bit o' news as'll hearten y  
up more than a double tot o' rum apiece!

WIX. A—a chance?

SHILLITOE. Not an earthly. Death's got his fingers a  
our throats, and bloomin' well means to keep 'em there till  
he's choked the life out of us. We'd have to face that much  
one day or other in any case.

WIX [*piteously*]. But not in the dark, not in the chokin'  
dark.

SHILLITOE. Dark or sunshine, my pore lad, we can now  
snap our own fingers at him in return. I've something 'ere  
—[*fumbles in trouser pockets*—that'll make Death so gentle  
he won't know himself from his twin brother Sleep.

[*Produces small blue phial with orange label.*]

MARTIN. Lord forgive you for a liar! 'Tis nothin' but  
a lotion.

SHILLITOE. A lotion! It's laudanum, lads, blessed laud-  
anum! I pinched it this mornin' from the sick bay, while  
I was waitin' to be examined for cells.

MARTIN. Pinched it? 'Ow!

SHILLITOE. The poison cupboard 'appened to be un-  
locked, so—

[*Illustrating by dumb show.*]  
MARTIN [*admiringly*]. You always was 'andy with your  
fingers, Orlbert. What did you want it for?

SHILLITOE [*wearily*]. To deaden the damned monotony of  
ten days' cells, I s'pose.

WIX [*after a pause*]. 'Ow much is a—a fatal dose, as the  
sayin' is?

SHILLITOE. Ah! The sick-bay atooard warned me o' that  
when he gave me a drop one day for the toothache. One  
they doses—[*taps bottle*—he says, is just enough to do the  
ick. Nothing would wake a man then but the last Trump  
Tattoo. Let's get at the light, chum, and I'll serve out  
ot all round.

## A KING'S HARD BARGAIN

*[He holds the phial before the lantern, and silently counts the doses—"One, two"—then stops, with a sharp intake of his breath.]*

MARTIN *[tensely]*. What's wrong?

SHILLITOE *[still staring at phial]*. Nothing.

WIX *[in alarm]*. Ain't there enough?

SHILLITOE *[quietly]*. Plenty for all—of you. Who's the youngest? Wix, your pipe.

*[Wix produces pipe, into bowl of which SHILLITOE carefully measures the first dose.]*

That's right. Next man—"Fincher."

*[MARTIN holds out his, into which SHILLITOE empties the phial.]*

*[Wix lifts his unsteadily to his lips; SHILLITOE lays a restraining hand on his arm.]*

My lad, you've forgot something.

WIX *[after a moment's consideration]*. The King!

MARTIN and WIX. The King! Gawd bless him!

*[Both drink the loyal toast, SHILLITOE meanwhile standing at the salute.]*

SHILLITOE. Aye, Gawd bless him!

WIX *[to SHILLITOE]*. But your tot? You ain't drunk it.

SHILLITOE *[quietly dropping the phial]*. That's all right. There were only two.

*[MARTIN snatches up the phial, holds it before lantern, and turns it upside down. Wix examines it in silence, then realizing his sacrifice, both wring his hands, and turn away to hide their feelings.]*

WIX *[wonderingly, still holding his hands]*. You did that for us, chum?

SHILLITOE *[with a short laugh]*. It's nothing. Ever since I was a nipper in the Drums I've been, first a Queen's, then a King's, 'Aid Bargain. I'd like to find one decent entry on my defaulters sheet when I get Topside.

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

WIX [*turning away, his face in his hands*]. Gawd bless you, mum, and—good night!

SHILLITOE [*gravely*]. Same to you, comrades both! [*As they sink back upon the bags in attitudes of abandonment, he drops into a sitting posture—his elbows on his knees, his face between his palms, and stares into the lantern.*] A Private of Marines ain't expected to live like a gentleman. But at least he can die like one.

[*Lantern flame flickers and goes out.*]

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SCENE III: *Darken stage. Church chimes and organ heard off p., then crescendo to p. Bags and rack-set and gear fly'd. Lights full up. Discover garden set as in SCENE I. PAGETT is still asleep, he stirs, wakes, and sits up with horror depicted on his face. Enter QUICK hurriedly U.C., pauses, and crosses R. to PAGETT.*

QUICK [*to PAGETT*]. That there signal I was called away for there's bad news—damned bad!

PAGETT [*still dazed, and staring straight before him into auditorium*]. The *Belligerent* has been in collision, and gone down.

QUICK. Good God! How did you know that? I've come straight from the signal station as fast as my legs could bring me.

PAGETT [*dreamily*]. There's quicker ways even than your ways. I've been aboard myself.

QUICK. You mean—you and Shillitoe?

PAGETT [*in a hoarse whisper*]. Shillitoe's gone down with

[*PAGETT, rising to his feet, appears to gaze intently at something invisible passing across the auditorium. Mechanically he brings his right hand to the valve.*]

## A KING'S HARD BARGAIN

QUICK [*following his gaze*]. Who passes, shipmate?

FACETT [*solemnly*]. A King's Hard Bargain!

[*The organ swells out the sea hymn "Eternal Father, strong to save," as the curtain slowly falls.*]

CURTAIN

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## EXERCISES





## EXERCISES

### THE DUMB AND THE BLIND

1. Say what you consider to be the supreme moment of the play.
2. In reading the play for the first time, did you feel any astonishment, or were you expecting the main incident?
3. Explain the significance of the title of the play.
4. What do you learn about the daily life of Joe Henderson and of his wife?
5. Suggest any reasons for believing that Charles Dickens would have appreciated this play.
6. What are the chief peculiarities in the Cockney dialect as spoken by the characters in "The Dumb and the Blind"?
7. Mention several points of (a) likeness, (b) dissimilarity, between this play and "It's the Poor that 'Elps the Poor" (see *One-Act Plays of To-day*, Second Series).

### HOW THE WEATHER IS MADE

1. What is a fantasy? How does it differ from light comedy? What other fantasies do you know?
2. In this play Mr Brighthouse represents the twelve months as girls. Which months might possibly be imagined as men? How would they be dressed?
3. Find a quotation about each month of the year (as far as possible) from the works of well-known poets.

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

4. Write a descriptive article entitled "The Loveliest Month of the Year."
5. How would you personify Dawn, Dusk, Spring, Autumn? Mention the predominating colours in the dress of each one.
6. Say briefly (in not more than twelve lines) how the dramatist explains the vagaries of the English weather.
7. Dr Johnson always refused to discuss the weather. Give reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with him in this.

## THE GOLDEN DOOM

1. Write a brief summary of the play in not more than a hundred and fifty words.
2. Contrast "The Golden Doom" with "A Night at an Inn" (see *One-Act Plays of To-day*, First Series).
3. Explain the meaning of "It doesn't scan," and say whether the girl's criticism was just.
4. What traces of astrology are to be found (a) in popular superstition, (b) in the English language?
5. Mention any other plays, poems, or stories which treat of the idea of doom from the stars.

## RORY AFORESAID

- Write brief summaries of the characters of MacCallum, MacColl, and MacIntosh.
1. Analyse and enumerate the various circumstances that contribute to the humour of the trial.
  2. What is the significance of 'aforesaid' in legal language?
  3. What other words occur frequently in the law-courts?
  4. What is meant by (a) the pursuer, (b) judgment for the defender, with expenses.

## EXERCISES

5. What would have happened if MacCallum had appealed against the sheriff's decision?
6. Read the trial scene in *The Pickwick Papers* (Bardell versus Pickwick) and compare with the play "Rory Aforesaid."
7. Write an essay on "Famous Trials in Fiction."

## THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

1. Compare the characters of Mrs Owens and her sister Edie.
2. Give an account of the incidents of the evening as they might have been related by Mr Skrimshure or by Fred Owens.
3. What is the significance of the title at various points of the play?
4. In what respects is "The Master of the House" (a) like, (b) unlike, "The Dear Departed" by the same author (see *Our Act Plays of To-day*, Second Series).
5. Say how you would describe the nature of this play.
6. Write an original short story entitled "The Black Sheep."

## FRIENDS

1. What is the theme of this play?
2. Summarize the main incidents of the play.
3. Give examples of Irish humour as revealed in the speeches of Donagan and O'Flaherty.
4. Do you consider this play to be more humorous than "Rory Aforesaid" or less? Give reasons.
5. How does farce differ from light comedy and from melodrama?
6. Write an essay on "Friendship" and include your definition of the word.

# ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

## MIMI

- How would you classify this play? What words seem to describe its nature most aptly?
- Say what strikes you as being characteristically French in the play.
- Compare the two girls Mimi and Musette.
- What did Mimi mean by saying, "Perhaps there are caprices in my song, but Rodolphe is the refrain"?
- Do you know any English novelists who have been influenced by the life of the Latin Quarter?
- Write an imaginary conversation between Rodolphe and his uncle on the subject of success.

## THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

- Describe the character of the Bishop as revealed in the play.
- Explain how the treatment that he received from the Bishop altered the convict's feelings toward the world generally.
- Read the first book of *Les Misérables* and show where the author of the play has modified the story.
- Discuss the opinions of Personne concerning her brother.
- Write a short summary of the play and add one sentence explaining the theme underlying it.

## BETWEEN THE SOUP AND THE SAVOURY

- What is an anagram? Quote one example.
- Discuss the relationship between the servants and the family upstairs.
- Compare the character of Emily with that of Amanda in "Op-o'-me-Thumb" (see *One-Act Plays of To-day*, Second Series).

## EXERCISES

4. Which plays in this volume reveal (a) unmixed humour, (b) humour blended with pathos? Which appeals to you the more strongly?
5. Summarize the play in not more than two hundred words.
6. Write an essay on "Make-believe."

## MASTER WAYFARER

1. Draw a sketch of the inn-parlour as it would appear in daylight.
2. The time of "Master Wayfarer" is the eighteenth century. What expressions or circumstances in the play clearly indicate this?
3. Say whether you would call the play a fantasy. If not, how would you describe it?
4. The four characters all pass through a crisis of importance on the evening when the Wayfarer calls at "The Pigeon Pie." Describe briefly what happens to each.
5. Would the play have been improved if the Wayfarer had revealed himself to Phoebe as her father?
6. Explain why Master Beamish, after hearing that Master Smeaton has lost everything for his king, exclaims, "A traitor, eh?"
7. Explain the meaning of "Love is a *soufflé* . . . But comfort and ease are the *pièce de résistance*."
8. Write at least thirty lines on the subject of "Punch and Judy."

## THE POT OF BROTH

1. Summarize the main incidents of the play in not more than two hundred words.
2. Describe the appearance (as you imagine it) of the three characters in "The Pot of Broth."

## ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TO-DAY

3. Write a conversation which may be supposed to take place between the priest, Sibby, and John.
4. Write an essay on "Superstitions," or write a tramp's diary for one week.
5. Compare "The Pot of Broth" with "Friends" and with "The Rising of the Moon" (see *One-Act Plays of To-day*, Second Series). Arrange them in order of your preference and point out any differences between them.
6. Read more plays by W. B. Yeats.

## A KING'S HARD BARGAIN

1. What in your opinion is the supreme moment of this play?
  2. Mention if possible other examples of noble self-sacrifice which are suggested by that of Shullitoe.
  3. Show how the dramatist relates the events in Scene II with the scenes which precede and follow.
  4. Suggest why mention is made of telepathy, wireless, clair practice, and Loveday Yeo. Say whether there is anything in the play which could be omitted without loss.
- Explain the title and describe the nature of the play.

